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ANNIE JENNINGS.

A Novel.

BY

LESLIE GORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

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ANNIE JENNINGS.

CHAPTER I.

MISS GRAY.

WITH veil drawn down, and active hurried tread did Annie—our Annie, with the sweet Madonna face, retrace her steps to Broughton Place. That gloomy corner, fit abode for cats, and only cats, she thought, was now o'er-shadowed by a greater gloom than had yet enveloped it; yet a gloom caused by the visit of a king. Wrapt in

thoughts, past, present, and to come, she neither heard the flapping of the angel's wings, nor saw his seal, nor knew of his presence, though the air was filled with the sense of it; and on the steps his shadow lay—but she felt not its mystery.

Into her room she ran, taking off her bonnet neatly; tidily folding up its strings, into which she stuck her little pins to keep them in their folds; then laid by the velvet jacket, and the smart silk dress, the collar and the cuffs, and the veil, each into their respective places. Looked at herself in the glass, remarked with pleasure the recovered paleness of the finely chiselled nose, and thought of Andrew's beautiful voice, and quite forgot the length of his legs,

and mentally arranged what dress she would wear next day when she expected to receive a visit from him, and determined, no matter how great should be her provocation, not to weep. "No," she uttered aloud, "I will not give occasion for that curious little girl to say that my nose is red."

Little did Annie contemplate how soon that nose would be very red, if weeping bitter tears should cause it; but now, self-absorbed, she joined Aunt Jane in the sitting-room.

"Aunt Jane," she said, speaking from the very door, "I hope you have not been anxious because I staid out so long, I could not—" She stopt; having now reached the sofa on which lay Miss Gray.

“She is asleep,” she muttered; then bending over her she grew alarmed, for indeed it was not sleep Miss Gray enjoyed. Flying to the bell, Annie rang loudly for Janet.

“Janet, Janet, come here quickly! Aunt Jane has fainted, see here.” Very much alarmed, Janet ran forward, and looking earnestly into the face of her poor mistress, she burst out crying.

“Oh, Miss Annie, it is no faint, it is a fit of some kind—God grant that she will ever wake up from it.”

“Do not say such horrible things, Janet, I am very angry,” cried Annie in agony. “Run, run for a doctor, fetch the nearest at hand, and—stay—yes, take a cab then for Doctor Jennings,

tell him I sent for him, that my aunt is very ill; and oh, Janet, hasten."

She needed no spur; sending up another maid to Annie, she rushed to the nearest apothecary, dispatching him at full speed to her; then following out Annie's directions she went to Doctor Jennings' house. Mr. Smith tried all the usual remedies, but ineffectually; the poor soul showed no evidence of its presence, yet he assured Annie life was not extinct. Fifteen, twenty minutes were passed in anxious watching; ah, surely, death was standing by the mantel-piece holding back the pendulum of the pretty clock, its tick, tick, was so slow; but Annie's heart was beating so tumultuously she could not count its beats.

“Oh, God ! will he never come ?” she moaned, not now remembering him as her Cousin Andrew, or her lover, but as him who held the issues of life. Hush ! a carriage stops at the door, she hears a light step on the stairs, and in a second among them stands the great Doctor.

Mr. Smith steps obsequiously out of the way, merely explaining to him in a low voice in what state he had found the patient, and the remedies he had applied ; to which Dr. Jennings bent his head, making no comment ; first glancing at Annie then at Miss Gray, he examined her carefully. With pitiful gaze Annie watched his countenance, he felt it, and turned to press her hand.

“She will recover from this state,”

he said, "but of the ultimate results I cannot yet speak."

Even for this respite Annie returned fervent thanks, and the Doctor being a pious man echoed her.

In a sweet low voice, *without hurry, without rest*, ("Ohne Hast, Ohne Rast") he gave directions calming everyone by his manner, making each one equal to the occasion. Janet's loud weeping was checked—the apothecary was awed—and Annie's natural activity returned to her; she felt sensibly warmed and comforted by his smiling approval.

"What a splendid nurse I have entrapped from Miss Nightingale's staff," he whispered, and Annie felt joy in her sorrow.

Poor Miss Gray, laid in her nicely

warmed bed, showed signs of returning consciousness, and Annie bending over her, kissed her, murmuring gentle words.

“My pet,” articulated Miss Gray. “Thank God!” burst out Janet with a huge sob. The Doctor raised a warning finger, directed first to her and then to the door, and Janet became quite still.

After a few moments’ pause the poor invalid spoke again, and Annie, under the great Doctor’s directions explained what had occurred to her and all the events of the day, winding up by naming Dr. Jennings to her.

Miss Gray smiled faintly, and held out her hand to him, he pressed it

cheerfully, and again his fingers felt her pulse.

“All right, Miss Gray; now keep quiet and give poor Miss Jennings no more frights; I will call again in the morning.”

“I often wished to meet you, Doctor, but Annie was not willing,” slowly said Miss Gray. The Doctor smiled and glanced at Annie’s crimsoned face.

“She won’t object again, dear Madam, take my word for it,” answered the Doctor. “It was she who sent for me now. Good night, Miss Gray,” then pressing Annie’s hand, he vanished.

Miss Gray had a quiet night but not a good one, she slept very little.

Annie and Janet shared the watch between them. Annie taking the latter half of it. When morning dawned, Miss Gray desired to have the curtains drawn back for the full light to have entrance; she was perfectly collected and calm.

“Annie, my darling, can you bear to hear what I must say?”

Annie shivered, she knew instinctively what would follow.

“Yes, Aunt,” she returned as firmly as she could.

“I am dying, darling,—I do not regret it, love, except for your sake. Beautiful and unprotected I must leave you, and it weighs on me. Comforts, so far as regards wealth, I can leave you, but no companion

(Annie sobbed). You have been a good child to me, for ten years we have companied together, and never disagreed, save once for a few hours. I was vexed with you, but I know you acted to the best of your judgment. Even although I regret your lonely position now, dear, I do not think I was wrong in advising you to break with Mr. Maitland; that match would not have brought you happiness I believe. Yet the way *he* went about to prevent it was not right. Ah! dear, I am aggrieved for Mr. Merton."

Miss Gray sighed and closed her eyes. Annie was striving to make up her mind to tell her not to grieve for her lonely state, that she had provided a

substitute for her young lover; yet even here at the bed of death she felt a sense of shame in the act, besides she could not explain the complex feelings which actuated her to take such a step. Yet she must tell somehow—so she plunged into it at once.

“Aunt Jane, I cannot explain how it came about, but I must tell you all the same. Yesterday I was out a long time, I was with Dr. Jennings—he is my Cousin Andrew, you know—and when children we were engaged to be married. (Our own understanding you comprehend,) he married a few years ago, but his wife is dead; and yesterday he asked me to renew our early engagement, and take care of his little daughter; and I promised.”

Annie hid her face in the bed-clothes, and tried to smother her sobs. Miss Gray was amazed, but too weak to give evidence of it ; all she could utter was—

“ So soon, my child.”

“ Yes, Aunt, now or never.”

“ Did you tell him of the *other* ?”

Annie made no reply.

“ You should tell him, Annie.”

Still no answer ! Miss Gray lay back thoughtfully on the pillow, and again she spoke—

“ Annie, do you love him ?”

“ I—I—believe so.”

“ Then it was all a mistake about your love for the other ?”

“ I do not know, dear Aunt, indeed I scarcely understand myself. Do not

torment yourself about me now, dearest Aunt, believe me I will make him a good wife, and he is so good and kind, you may be quite happy about me. But, please God, dear Aunt, you will stay with your poor Annie a little longer."

Annie kissed her fondly, and Miss Gray's eyes filled with tears.

"Bless you, my child," she said, "I would willingly stay if He willed it."

Miss Gray knew her hours were numbered; she was not to see another week on earth, perhaps not half a week, and very anxious she was to see the doctor and *one other*. The other one, who should he be, but him she had so worshipped, who promised to teach

her the better way, whom blindfolded she had followed, and into paths surely not trodden by the meek in heart, whose promise is so rich "that they shall inherit the earth."

"Annie, after the Doctor's visit, send for Mr. Merton."

Annie did not relish the commission, but her dying aunt should be refused nothing. Dr. Jennings came (as he said he would, the evening before) and Miss Gray begged to see him alone. For more than half an hour that visit lasted, and during it Annie paced impatiently the drawing-room floor. Impatiently because nervously, her normal condition of quietude was quite gone, she was now living in an unnatural state. At last the door of the sick-

room opened, Annie stopped her march, and with a hand laid to her breast, listened for the soft tread of her lover Doctor. He entered, and at a glance she read half of his message—it was death's—the other half bespoke joy, life's message.

“O, Andrew! what is it?” she said, meeting half way his ready arms.

“She must depart in peace, Annie, if we can give it her.”

“How, Andrew?” startled Annie said.

“By leaving you bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, that no man can put asunder, for God has joined us.”

“O, Andrew.”

“She is right, my Annie, although L

death and life are antagonists, let life now take a sting from death. To-morrow, Annie, let us marry, and in her room, she wishes it. Will you consent, my cousin—my companion—to be my bride within forty-eight hours?”

So delicately did Dr. Jennings urge their early courtship, to prove to Annie how well acquainted they two were; and she consented, albeit her secret weighed on her, had she but time she thought to have confessed it before they married. Now she could not, it was out of the question.

“I must buy the ring, little woman, but who shall be the minister? my Annie is a church-goer, and I a Free Kirkite.”

“Please, do you bring the minister, too?” said Annie, in a low voice. “Only to please Aunt Jane did I ever leave the kirk.”

“Will it vex her now if I do so?”

“No, no, I will see to that,” she answered, hastily, and they parted; the Doctor kissing her hand with bended knee, and Annie receiving his kisses in an utter state of bewilderment; strange ideas mingled in her brain, Aunt Jane’s dying, Dr. Jennings’ wooing, young Charley’s dismissal: and then—her dress. Was she never to have a wedding-dress and veil? and bridesmaids? and bride’s cake? and honeymoon? or were all these things to be one day, and

the shroud, and the coffin, and the funeral the next ?

Death and life thus strangely mingled, but life leads the way, and Annie must strive to feel that the ground beneath her feet is that on which she must tread, and not the unknown land for which Aunt Jane is bound.

“Aunt Jane, dearest Aunt ! will it, indeed, please you to see me the wife of Andrew Jennings ?”

“Yes, darling,” she answered, faintly, “I should then die in peace. Will you consent, my Annie ?”

“Yes, for your sake,” and Annie sobbed on her knees beside her, “on one small condition, Aunt, if you will

permit me to be married according to the Presbyterian form."

Aunt Jane gazed at her earnestly, and sighed; then laying one hand on her forehead, she said—

"As you wish, dear; I cannot say against it."

Miss Gray understood well the cause of her request; she closed her eyes, and her lips moved as in prayer, and Annie guessed that for Mr. Merton her petition was laid at the mercy-seat.

"Have you sent for Mr. Merton, Annie, dear?" she inquired, after the lapse of a few moments.

"Not yet, dear Aunt; I will directly."

"Yes, dear, at once," feverishly

begged Miss Gray, and Annie hastened to obey. She wrote the following succinct note :—

“ DEAR SIR,—Aunt Jane is dying and wishes to see you.

“ Yours in haste,

“ ANNIE JENNINGS.”

This note the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton received just as he was closing up a long letter to his Cousin Charley, in which he had laid before him the enormity of his conduct, showed how he had stepped to the very edge of the precipice of destruction, and how by means of Mr. Elliot, he, the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, the young Prophet, had been called in to save him.

Mr. Merton did not hesitate to call his being stopped that day by Mr. Elliot providential—he believed it to be so. He then told the rash young man how he had saved him, by what means he had prevailed on Miss Jennings to renounce him; for Mr. Merton gloried in his deeds, and did not strive to hide them, and meant all he said. Then he concluded in these words:—

“I have saved you this time, Charley, from an act which would have crushed you—an act for which, after the first passion had passed away, as it must have done, you would have blushed. Let it be a warning to you, boy!—let like mate with like; no good comes of aught else. Nature

will have its way; the duckling frightens the mother-in-law hen—she will take to the water, in this showing her sense, for there is her home; but believe me, Cousin Charley, the webfeet look ugly on land, and everyone sees it. Miss Jennings is a very, a remarkably pretty person, looking graceful and admirable in her own element, but to place her among our ancestors to carry on our line—oh, Charley! your father's image would haunt me to my dying day if I permitted such an insult to his house."

Mr. Merton was satisfied with this brilliant peroration; he knew it to be a *coup*, and his bosom's lord sat lighter on his throne. With a smile of content he was fastening up the cover

when John entered the study with Miss Jennings' note. It was received carelessly by his master. Scarcely looking at it as John laid it beside him, he inquired—

“Any messenger waiting?”

“No, sir, not waiting,” replied John, slowly. His manner was peculiar, and arrested the Honourable and Reverend Daniel's attention; he looked up at him.

“What's the matter, John; you look solemn?”

“Nothing, Master Daniel,” he said, forgetful for a moment of the sanctity of the Prophet; “except what I'm thinking that note will tell you.”

Mr. Merton tore it open, and read

Annie's very unpleasantly bare statement of a melancholy fact ; and, quite overcome, the natural man broke forth—

“Oh, John, poor Miss Gray !”

“Yes, sir, that was what I meant. The maid told me, poor thing, in floods of tears.”

“I must go to her at once. Poor, poor Miss Gray !”

Seizing from the old man his hat and umbrella, he rushed out of doors, forgetful of paying his accustomed duty to Lady Merton, or of even sending her a message ; forgetful too of his Indian letter left unstamped on his writing-desk ; and in a very short space of time he was at Miss Gray's bedside.

“Dear old friend, how grieved I feel,” he said, now sitting beside poor Aunt Jane, holding her hand in his; “I am so sorry.”

“You are very good,” she answered, sweetly.

Mr. Merton sighed; he had seen too much of death’s work not to know all his touches, and in the softened voice and smoothed face he now recognised his hand.

Miss Gray was touched by his feeling, and tears filled her poor eyes.

“Dear Mr. Merton, may I speak to you? although what I say may appear presuming for me to utter; but on the brink of the unknown country, one gets a courage not their

own in trying to do the Lord's work. *My day is far spent, my night is at hand*; I desire to say something before I go out into the darkness."

Quite exhausted, Miss Gray ceased for a few moments, looking upwards.

"Say what you like, dear Miss Gray—anything that presses on you, burdens you. I do not understand you exactly, but you cannot offend me. I do not like to see you tired; let me come again."

"Thank you, sir, but I may not be here; and sinner as I am, it is not of myself that I would now speak, but of you. Yes, Mr. Merton, for I have in my blind admiration

perhaps fostered a canker which is eating into your noble nature. Oh! sir, forgive me. Pride, pride is eating you up, and no one will care to tell you of it. To me is left the task—a dying woman you will bear with, whose inborn conviction came to her as she lay dying, sent to her from above, may be—receive it, sir, as a message given to her, sent by our Heavenly Father—our common Father, Mr. Merton—to bless both you and her. Oh! pray, sir, to be shown this black spot, wrestle and pray; and the Lord in His mercy grant that we may meet again in His blessed kingdom, even though I be there but a door-keeper.”

Mr. Merton's proud spirit was

shocked; his ideas of the fitting were so upset. He, the pastor, sent for by a dying sheep to be told his sins! The angry colour flitted to and fro; he bent his head to hide it, but Miss Gray's perceptions were supernaturally sharpened, and she broke out into a passionate wail. Extricating her hand from his loosened clasp, she folded her two palms together, and her wounded spirit found utterance in prayer. Aloud she prayed, with a fervour and an eloquence she had never found before, for him her pastor, her loved, almost worshipped minister, that this one great sin might be shown to him in all its deformity. With streaming tears (as she would have expressed it), she

wrestled for him; and how could he be otherwise than affected to see and hear this dying creature, not thinking of herself and her journey so close at hand, but of him whom she so truly loved. Insensibly the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton slipped upon his knees, and when her prayer ceased, his lips firmly moved in a fervent "Amen!"

With folded hands laid on his bent head, she blessed him, and he humbly thanked her.

"Leave me now; but if I am alive to-morrow, will you come again?"

Mr. Merton promised her; and bewildered, affected, he went softly away.

CHAPTER II.

A MARRIAGE—A DEATH—AND A FUNERAL.

“POOR Miss Gray, I feel quite sorry for her,” said Lady Merton to her son, graciously.

“Yes, mother, it is very sad.”

“Do not take it so much to heart, my son; she is not young. We were not all born at the same moment, neither can we die in the same moment. It is not as if it were that young person,

her niece, who was cut off in her prime."

The Honourable and Reverend Daniel had kept secret from his mother that young person's audacious aspirations, in hopes to crush them by his own moral weight, and spare her the shock altogether.

"What age is Miss Gray, Daniel? I should say it is not of age she is dying."

"Oh dear, no, mother (abstractedly) "it is spasms of the heart."

Lady Merton was glad to hear this, for it was not heart but head was her weak point, and she continued the conversation more cheerfully, wearing the subject to rags, all unconsciously irritating her son by doing

so; and at the first moment that he could with due decorum leave her after dinner, he fled for refuge and contemplation to his study, baring his heart for inspection as he had never done before.

First his eye fell on his Indian letter, lying on his desk as he had left it in the morning. He opened it deliberately, reading it carefully through, pondering each paragraph, with burning face, and then he slowly tore it, and dropped it into the fire, watching it as it burned till nothing remained. Then—but we will not search further into the secrets of that young man's hidden nature, nor reveal more of his present acts; suffice it to say, that the prayer of

faith breathed so fervently by the dying woman bore evidence of being answered.

The lamp of life paled and sparkled by turns in that dark corner house in Broughton Place, visibly growing exhausted; yet so happy and peaceful looked Aunt Jane, that Annie was beguiled into believing her stronger, and Doctor Jennings did not deceive her. He had been with her early that morning, and now Annie was beginning to look out for the arrival of her lover-cousin, Andrew, not *Doctor Jennings*.

Miss Gray had had also another visitor, whom she likewise expected back for the wedding. Mr. Merton had called early, and had been told

by her of the astounding fact of Annie, Madonna Annie's going to be married to Doctor Jennings.

"Dear Miss Gray, are you quite sure that this is not a — a — excuse me," Mr. Merton stammered.

"Sir, I know what you mean, I am perfectly collected. Annie is going to marry him; he is a distant cousin of hers, and they were brought up together. He tells me he always loved her."

"But, Miss Jennings; surely she cannot have cared for my cousin, or, if so, she cannot love this Doctor?"

"I do not know, Mr. Merton," said Miss Gray, weariedly. "I am glad to have her *settled* before I

die, and Doctor Jennings is an excellent man."

Mr. Merton was electrified; but Miss Gray was not in a fit state to be talked to on the matter. Besides, he felt a little awkward on many accounts, and a little unhappy, owing to his own latent love for the girl, and his conduct respecting the breaking off the engagement with Cousin Charley. But was he not rewarded for having burnt his letter? In this he felt a glow of satisfaction. Now Charley was freed—freed by Annie's own act; and surely such a jilt as she must appear in his eyes would cure his love in stabbing his heart. He resolved to keep dark his share in the matter until questioned, so as

to make the speedier cure of Cousin Charley's sickness.

Miss Gray now told her pastor that, as Doctor Jennings belonged to the Free Kirk, and Annie also being a member of it before she lived with her, they had agreed to be married by the Reverend Mr. Patterson, according to the Presbyterian form.

Mr. Merton heard this with pain, although he did not desire to be the officer on this occasion, still it was a blow, a lamb strayed from the fold; surely his sin had found him out.

“I hope this does not vex you, sir. I would not have it so, but in such a matter, of course the principal

parties should judge for themselves; but, Mr. Merton," (poor Miss Gray added, as a set-off to the marriage being taken out of his hands)—"you will bury me, I trust;" and the humbled Prophet bent his head in reply.

He was humbled, and in striving to show Miss Gray a sense of it, he now entreated permission to attend the wedding as a guest, though not permitted the privilege of performing the ceremony.

Miss Gray laid one hand gratefully on his, in acknowledgment of his kindness.

"Thank you, sir; you do us honour. At three o'clock we expect to have the knot tied." Then Mr. Mer-

ton left her, promising to be punctual to the hour named.

Shortly after, Annie entered her Aunt's room attired in spotless white muslin, without flower, or ribbon, or ornament; her glossy hair was smoothly braided across her polished forehead, beneath which shone her almond-shaped eyes, with deeper meaning than was their wont. She bent over her Aunt, who viewed her admiringly.

"Bless you, darling!" she said; and Annie trembled. No wonder! Surely a wedding under such circumstances where death just waits outside the door, is enough to make the stoutest heart quail.

"My Annie, you will see at

your wedding an unexpected guest.”

“Who? dear Aunt,” she inquired, with surprise.

“Mr. Merton. It was good in him to invite himself; and I could not refuse his request. He is doing a violence to his feelings in appearing at a Presbyterian wedding, at yours especially, dear.

A taunt was rising to Annie's lips, which with difficulty she repressed from respect to her dying Aunt, and replied, that anything she wished would please her. Then she moved about the room, putting aside empty, half-empty, and full phials, the accompaniments of sickness even of a few hours,—and tidying up the

litter of a sick room. Her Aunt watched her every motion, propped up by pillows, and dressed in a cap with white satin ribbons, and in a snow-white peignoir. Miss Gray wished to put on her cap with the red roses, but Annie could not endure the sight; and to pacify her she had trimmed up a night-cap with ribbons.

Annie's eyes turned repeatedly to the watch in its case on the toilet-table, and at this moment the hammer on the striking weight of the hall clock fell with deliberation, announcing one—two—three. The hour had arrived for Annie's marriage.

A carriage now draws up to the

door, out of which steps Andrew Jennings, beaming with happiness, and the Reverend Mr. Patterson, looking clerical in large white tie and shining black clothes. They are joined by a foot arrival, the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton, who walks in their wake upstairs, looking as gentlemanlike as ever, but less like a Maitland or a Merton.

All the blood in Annie's veins now floods her cheeks, and then retreating, leaves her looking like a beautiful statue. She does not faint, simply because she *must* not, the exigencies of the case bringing moral force to overcome the tendency; and each person

feeling the need for expedition, at once take up their places. Mr. Merton stands beside Miss Gray; the Reverend Mr. Patterson walks behind a table, on which he places a book with black leather back; and Andrew, taking Annie's cold fingers, leads her opposite to him, and the marriage ceremony commences.

Mr. Patterson considerably makes it as short as possible, and very soon he is ready to bless the married couple, which he proceeds to do with outspread arms looking very like raven's wings; and Andrew, whose face in his supreme happiness shines out in wonderful beauty, presses Annie to his heart as his

own, his very own Annie. Then softly they go over to the side of poor Aunt Jane, who fervently blesses them both, kissing Andrew on his noble forehead, and pressing Annie to her bosom.

The Honourable and Reverend Daniel was feeling in a very awkward position. He tried to join in the congratulations, and managed to shake hands with the bridegroom, but the bride would not look near him, she would not receive any good wishes from him.

This was hard to bear, the harder for being deserved, and Mr. Merton's conscience, made lively by Miss Gray's prayers, would not be stilled until he had begged sweet

Annie's pardon. Timidly advancing, he held out a hand, and wished her joy, adding in a low voice—

“Will you forgive me?”

Giving him the very tips of her fingers, Annie turned away,—colouring deeply at the same time, as she perceived that the whisper had not escaped the ears of the quick-witted Doctor.

But there was no time for private talk, for the whole attention of those present were turned to one object—poor Miss Gray. Her last hour had struck—her journey was just beginning.

“See, see to Miss Gray,” cried Mr. Patterson, the most disengaged of the party, and instantly he commenced a prayer.

“Aunt, dear Aunt!” cried Annie.

Her eyes were closed but the mouth smiled, and sweeter still grew her smile as the well-remembered nasal rhythm of Presbyterian prayer fell on her ears. It brought her back to early days—to her country home—to dead father—dead mother—to brother and sister lost when both were young, and a flood of early memories rushed over her, and although all uncomprehended rose up that wandering ill-digested prayer, yet it satisfied her parting spirit.

Opening her eyes she looked brightly round on Annie, on Mr. Merton, on Doctor Jennings, and on Mr. Patterson, then muttering

the words *going home*, she fell back and expired.

Doctor Jennings, whose hand had never left her pulse during that prayer, now relinquished it, and led Annie from the room occupied by death,—leaving the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton and the Reverend Mr. Patterson standing face to face.

Unnoticed and unheeded had Mr. Merton been obliged to stand by the dying bed of a member of his own flock—a member of the church of which he was a priest, and to witness that place—his proper place—filled by one whose ministry he could not recognise. Surely his sin had found him out.

He could not bear it a moment longer, giving Miss Gray one mournful look, he left the room and the house, and sought for relief and rest under the shadow of his own roof.

He hastened into his study, bolted the door, and paced the room hurriedly to and fro. Deep in painful thought he paced it, and then sitting down to his desk, he wrote a note to Dr. Jennings, in which he made a solemn protest against poor Miss Gray being laid in her grave without having the prayers of the church read over her.

The tension of his mind now relaxed after despatching his note, and he lay back in his leather chair to rest.

In due course he received this answer from Dr. Jennings :

“ Dear Sir,

“ Miss Gray’s will is to be read on Thursday. Will you be so good as to attend at the residence at one o’clock ? As to the interment, Mrs. Jennings agrees with me in accepting your offer of reading the burial service, as being most agreeable to the feelings of her poor aunt.

“ I am, dear sir,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ ANDREW JENNINGS.”

“ That matter is then arranged satisfactorily,” thought the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton, and very much relieved, he returned to his ordinary state of feeling.

On Thursday, at the hour Dr. Jen-

nings had mentioned, Mr. Merton reached Broughton Place, flat No. 3, and going up stairs was met by Dr. Jennings, who brought him into the drawing-room occupied solely by poor Miss Gray's man of business. He began to read the will at once. It was very simple and easily got through. One hundred pounds was left to the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton for charitable purposes, and fifty pounds to himself in testimony of respect and gratitude for many years of kindness. Fifty pounds to her faithful servant Janet, and the remainder of her property, funded and chattel, to her dear niece and adopted daughter, Annie Jennings.

This was all, and no directions left

as to her place of burial, or by whom she wished the last offices to be performed. Mr. Patterson was most eager to have the honour of it, and hearing from Dr. Jennings that Miss Gray had expressed no wishes in reference to it in her will, he claimed her as his own.

“She died under my ministration, Dr. Jennings, and what adds weight to this consideration, until she came to reside in this town about twelve years ago, she was a constant attendant at the Free Kirk.”

“Mrs. Jennings agrees with me, sir, that Miss Gray’s own desires are fulfilled in permitting Mr. Merton to inter her as a member of his church. Besides, sir, Mr. Merton tells me that

a few hours before her death she spoke to him on this very subject, requesting him to bury her."

Mr. Patterson could say nothing against this, nor press the matter further on Dr. Jennings. He was not a man to be forced into a change of purpose, so Mr. Patterson had to be contented talking everywhere how in her last moments Miss Gray had returned to her early creed, finding comfort alone in the full free Gospel message, the uncovenanted mercies of God.

He introduced the subject in his next Sabbath's sermon, and, with John Bogle's assistance, he wrote and published a tract called "Strayed, not Lost; or, The Dying Moments of

a Reclaimed Member of the Free Kirk.”

Undisturbed by this wrangling as to who had given her her passport to the unknown land lay Miss Gray as she would surely have wished, under shadow of her loved pastor's church—laid in her grass grave by his hands, while over her he spoke those blessed words—holy, comforting, soothing words of the Church's beautiful liturgy; committing this our sister to the ground, “In sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life.”

CHAPTER III.

MRS. JENNINGS AND PENELOPE BECOME
FRIENDS.—MRS. J. GOES HOME.

FOR four weeks after poor Miss Gray's death, Annie, looking more Madonna-like than ever, resisted all the blandishments of the great Doctor, and remained in strict privacy in Broughton Place, flat No. 3. The only exception to this rule being the presence, for a few hours each day, of her husband and of his little Grecian.

That young lady had taken another turn with regard to Annie. The Doctor had spoken seriously to Mrs. M'Laren on the impropriety of talking foolishly before the child, and told her, since she had been the cause of putting such curious ideas as these into her head, she must eradicate them as soon as possible.

Mrs. M'Laren was scandalized at the business altogether, more especially since her master had selected this lady (whom little Penelope so stigmatized) to be his wife; and she devoted all her energies towards the destruction of the work of which she had been unwittingly the author. This was not so easily accomplished; the idea of Miss Jennings being a

widow, and of a widow being a very unpleasant character, had taken possession of the little girl's mind, and Mrs. M'Laren began to feel very alarmed indeed.

"I think, sir," she said to Dr. Jennings, "you had best not come to see her until she amends, and promises to call the lady *mamma*; your anger, if she could but believe it to be real anger, would go nearer to quell her than anything else."

"Very well, Mrs. M'Laren; I will go to her now, and tell her that until you can report to me that she will do as you desire her, and ask permission to visit Mrs. Jennings, I will have nothing to say to her."

"Thank you, sir," and Mrs. M'Laren

curtsied deeply her thanks and followed her master to little Penelope's presence; where the Doctor spoke very gravely to her, and wound up all by the threat of not seeing her again so long as she continued refractory. Penelope sat on his knee attentively listening, but saying not a word in reply, her eyes getting very round and filling with drops, and as he proceeded to rise, she clung to him, but he gravely put her aside, and when the door closed upon him she flew to Clary sobbing violently.

“Hush! hush! child, you will make yourself ill, and if you are really sorry you shall have your papa's forgiveness.”

No answer came to this, and the

nurse soothed her as best she could; still she cried, and cried herself to sleep in the end. When, after a couple of hours, she awoke, she called Clary to her side, and asked her to write a note to papa, which the little creature dictated herself. Lying on her side, high on her pillow, with one dimpled little hand supporting her flushed cheek, she told Clary, (who knelt beside her with her desk on the bed), what she wished her to say:—

“‘Dearest, darling, best papa—Penelope is sorry and will love mamma if you will only come and kiss her.’

“That will do, Clary, now send it at once,” the child said, feverishly.

“Your papa is not at home, dear, but I will leave the note in his study that he may get it as soon as he comes in.”

She was forced, much against her inclination, to be satisfied with this, not saying a word or eating anything, all nurse could do, but listening for every sound. At last the longed-for moment came; papa entered, and the poor little creature fled like a bird to his breast, moaning out, “Forgive, papa! forgive your own little child.”

“Yes, my precious, now she is papa’s own darling again.”

And the reconciliation was effected, completer even than Doctor Jennings had dared to hope. He brought

her with him next day—the day after the funeral—to visit his bride, and in fear and trembling as to how she would behave to her new mamma.

Annie had completed a very careful toilet, not because of her lover-husband, but because of little Miss Penelope Jennings; and arrayed in black silk dress, magnificent in its length of flowing skirt and white crêpe lisse collar and cuffs, with a row of large black polished beads round her ivory throat, she glided into poor Miss Gray's forsaken drawing-room, looking very lovely indeed, very fragile, and more Madonna-like than ever.

But what of her nose? Parian

marble would have shrunk aside as stained and spotted beside the exquisite whiteness of that sensitive feature, and Mrs. Jennings knew this; in her inmost soul she felt that the purity of her nose defied competition. And calm, reposed, with settled purpose and with dignity, Annie went forward to receive the visit of her husband and his child.

Doctor Jennings was enraptured; and taking the privileges of a husband, he embraced and kissed her, to the utter astonishment of his little Grecian. Blushing into shell-like pink, Annie withdrew from the impassioned man, and held out her arms to receive the child. Penelope gazed at

her fixedly, this time with admiration, her beauty pleased her infant fancy, and rushing into her open arms she hid her flushing face on her bosom.

“A triumph,” muttered the Doctor with great satisfaction.

“Yes, I think our victory is won,” answered Annie, smilingly raising her head with difficulty from the tightened clasp of Miss Penelope.

The victory was complete. From that moment she attached herself to Annie; every morning being driven in great state to Mrs. Jennings’ door, in Broughton Place, flat No. 3, in the Doctor’s handsome carriage, and called for by him late in the day.

In vain the Doctor complained of his bride's cruelty, she would not abate one day of the allotted four weeks.

Annie had several reasons for this arrangement. She desired a little space for reflection; events which had determined her course in life had been hurried on so rapidly that she felt breathless and bewildered. She seemed called on to mourn and rejoice, and then mourn again all at once—for a lover lost, or rather thrown away—for an aunt—a second mother, carried off out of the world in a brief moment—and lastly to joy for a husband gained.

A husband? Yes, a husband, not merely a lover, whose duty is to submit, to be even thankful for capricious

treatment, for conduct from the fair one, cruel, inexplicable, yet for which she gives no reason, attempts no explanation; and like a slave, to which he must submit and be thankful. Ah! a husband is a different being altogether—he has marital rights, which he is sure to exercise, for a time at least, until he gets into training; and this is not accomplished all in a day, and never, by some women, and never submitted to, by some men. Yet, as a rule, we may venture to assert that childless wives get what the Irishman calls the *controwl*.

And our Annie with the Madonna face had a strong will; but on the other hand Andrew Jennings was no common weak-minded man, who for the sake of

a quiet life would not struggle for the reins. Andrew Jennings held them slack; but if Annie ever flattered herself that she took them from his hands, she erred. He was a man of powerful passions, which, as in this instance of his marriage with his early love, is apparent, and overpowered his reasoning faculties for the moment, but only for the moment. He was gentle, yielding, loving where he could trust; but once deceived, Doctor Jennings would turn inward, and let his profession supply (in part) the needs of his great soul.

Annie now watched with deadly anxiety the arrival of the Indian mails; and in Broughton Place she was determined to remain until she should receive her expected next

letter. She revolved in her mind whether she should write or not to Charley, and daily and hourly she felt increasing dislike to confide her story to her husband; of course the delay added to the difficulty of doing so.

She had certainly a perplexing task before her; was she to write herself heartless and dishonourable to Charley? Was she to acknowledge to her husband that she married him with the ink scarce dry on paper sent to another man in which she acknowledged love and duty, the duty of a girl pledged for life to be his wife?

“Mr. Merton has written it all,” she thought, and to write now, *cui bono*? In her proudest though un-

acknowledged soul she considered Andrew Jennings' wife should not write words such as she must if she wrote at all; and so it happened that she lived and died, and gave no sign (on paper at least) to foolish, earnest, loving, deceived, betrayed Charley Maitland.

His letter arrived in due course, impassioned and loving as ever.

“Soon, my sweetest, fairest, I shall have your blessed image to kneel before—my own Madonna. Elliot is to fetch it to me; even now he must be with his precious freight on his way. Annie, darling, it will be something to soothe me when my heart yearns more wistfully than at ordinary times. I will bring it in my bed-room, so that it shall be the first image and

the last on which my eyes shall rest. I dream of you, think of you, dearest, from morning until dewy eve. Four months I can now lay aside, and count over my probation—three years and eight months. Heigh ho! Yet I am happy, so happy in your love, thinking over what is in store, laid by in the blessed future, when you and I shall wander through the forests of my early home, and when I can then smile over these days of anxious expectancy. Be true, précieux one, and all will go well. Do not be afraid of dear old Daniel, I shall win him over to buckle us yet.”

In Broughton Place, flat No. 3, Annie received this letter; in the privacy of her own bed-room Annie

read this letter; and with dry eyes, lest the nose should colour, Annie coned over every word, and then into the blazing coals of her own grate she dropped it.

With hands clasped on her knees she sat and watched it burn—burn—burn; and when the last faint curl of smoke arose, she pressed her hands to her heart and groaned from very agony. It was a sharp pain she then experienced—the sharpest she had ever felt or should feel again.

Her other letters received the same fate; eight long—long letters, and divers little notes, all were dropped deliberately one by one into that blazing grate by the fair fingers of Madonna Annie.

Two other relics were to be disposed of—a ring, a betrothal ring, containing in a secret chamber a lock of bright brown hair and a photograph of Charley.

Annie looked at them and then at the grate, and a violent sob came (she nearly forgot her nose, but not quite), her hand twitched nervously to and fro, but even *her* strength was not equal to the destruction she contemplated, and folding both in separate pieces of paper, and sealing them up, she placed them in a secret drawer of her poor aunt's Davenport; there she laid her secret—there she laid the relics of a betrayed trust—there she laid the witness of her great sin.

And now Mrs. Jennings is ready to go home.

To Hawthornden for a few days went Doctor and Mrs. Jennings, leaving behind them Penelope, Cleopatra, and Mrs. M'Laren.

In wrath little Penelope heard of this arrangement. She would go, too, she said. She loved mamma now as well as papa, and why should she be kept at home?

Annie would willingly have indulged her, but the Doctor refused to entertain the idea even for a moment.

"No, no, my Annchen," he said, tenderly, "you will soon have enough of the little one's company; but now is my turn." So the happy pair

went on their honeymoon, the bridegroom radiant, the bride serene; and returned, the bridegroom looking like a conqueror, the bride like a saint.

Those were the most blissful days the Doctor ever enjoyed, but Annie's happiness was evener distributed, almost all the days of her life received their share, not being greedily devoured as were that rash man's, who was in the habit of taking at a gulp his allotted portion. And now he tried to get into medical harness again with the same keen interest, but in vain. He was the same clever, kind physician, the same unwearied labourer in the sicknesses and casualties incident to mortal frames; yet in all these was a some-

thing wanting, perceptible chiefly to the weaker sex, and to the young and lovely in particular; for Doctor Jennings was a husband, and in love.

He dispatched his man of business privately to Loch Achray, and negotiations were entered into with the farmer and the farmer's wife, with whom in the early autumn, he, with his little Grecian, had sojourned; and the conclusion of the matter was that Doctor Jennings became master of the house and some land surrounding it.

Workmen were then soon busy about it, adding here, altering there; and the architect was put out of his mind at the curious orders the great Doctor gave.

“A library just there,” insisted the Doctor, “morning room there, for Mrs. Jennings—nursery, schoolroom, there for Miss Jennings,” &c.

“I cannot agree, Doctor Jennings. I really cannot agree, no man in his senses ever called this a plan,” said the architect, and he threw up the matter in disgust, and gave the house transmogrified to suit the Doctor’s caprice the name of “Lunatic Lodge,” which, when the Doctor heard, he said, good-humouredly—

“There is no originality in the name of Lunatic Asylum, and Lunatic Lodge is very like it; but my Annie, we will preserve the idea, for am not I a blessed, doting fool, a lunatic, a very madman? and our Highland home shall be named

after the planet favourable to idiots and to lovers—*Lunar Lodge.*” So Lunar Lodge it is to this day.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OUTWARD BOUND.

“LADY JULIA, are you quite comfortable?” inquired George Elliot, as he placed another rug round her ladyship’s knees. Seated on the deck of the fine transport ship the *Indus*, (with rather a rough sea under, through which she ploughed her way gallantly) sat Lady Julia, the fair bride of Mr. George Elliot, Lieutenant in Her Majesty’s Highlanders, who expected very shortly to see his name in the

Gazette as having attained the blessed rank of captain, and as soon as money and influence—to say nothing of death's possible finger in the pie—could be brought to bear on the matter, to leave that beatified state for a higher degree of happiness in the rank of major, and so on. Happy fellow! first of course supremely blest in Lady Julia's love—and secondly—in fortune's favours.

As yet, however, he is simply George Elliot, Lieutenant; and does not Lady Julia show love worthy of her unselfish sex in giving herself to him freely, fully—regardless of the world's taunts, and of a sister-in-law's severity?

“Georgie,” she said, languidly, “do

not go away to smoke, stay near me and shroud me in your *cloud*."

"In my *cloak*, Julia? you have it already round you."

"Ah, my husband, you are too literal, you never lose yourself in metaphor, and all the fantasies that love calls forth from a woman's breast. I said *cloud*, darling, meaning by it a double cloud of smoke and incense; I wanted you to worship at my feet, naughty man—and you would not understand me."

"I beg your pardon, Julia, I am stupid, I fear."

"No, no, do not say so, *hébété* is an ugly word, and must not be applied to my Georgie. No, if I might find a fault, I should say you take my little

babil too much *au sérieux*. However, darling, smoke away, only stay near me. I will read the news to you ; see, I have got the *Times*—excuse me—before I even look at the leading article, I must read, *births, deaths and marriages.*”

And Lady Julia ran her eyes quickly over the long list of comers in and goers out of this world, leaving the most interesting part to be read last.

“Our marriage again, Georgie,” (exclaimed her ladyship, glad to have the reading of it.) “Shall I read it to you, love?”

“If you like, Julia ; but I know all about it, and who married us, it was my father.”

“There again, my husband, you do not take my pleasantries as they are meant—but you are right. I am too addicted to *bredi-breda*, you will teach me the *vrai*, you good honest man.”

Elliot puffed out a great cloud of smoke, and wondered in his soul would this be always her style of talk, or was it only honey-mooning it she was ; meditating how to answer something in her style, his thoughts received another direction by her reading aloud a marriage in which he found more interest than in his own.

“My dear Doctor has gone and got married again, Georgie ? only think—I should be *au désespoir* were I in Edinburgh—let me read it to you.”

“ ‘ At Broughton Place, Edinburgh, Andrew Jennings, Esq., M.D., to Annie, only daughter of the late James Jennings, Lieutenant in her Majesty’s 7th Fusilier Regiment’ —and no date given, Georgie. Is it not strange ?”

George made no reply, but throwing away the remainder of the cigar he sprang to his feet, and snatched the paper from her, regardless of good breeding.

“ George,” said her ladyship, in grave reproachful tones : “ George—manners.”

“ Excuse me, Julia, I was very rude,” he answered, penitently, “ but if you only knew how this announcement astonishes and disturbs me—I can scarcely credit it.”

And he read the simple statement as if it were written in cuneiform letters, or in some other characters difficult to decipher.

“How can Dr. Jennings’ marriage affect you, George?” and she flashed on him her black eyes—“the lady—did you know her?”

“Ah, Julia, Julia! Do you remember the vampire at our ball, I showed her to you?”

“Yes, to be sure, a creature *sans cœur*.”

“Exactly—well, my dearest friend, Charley Maitland is frantically in love, and—here comes the startling fact—engaged to be married to her; I am actually bringing him out a magnificent painting, a portrait full

length, worth eighty guineas, and unless there is some other Annie Jennings living in Broughton Place, see here, she is married to this doctor."

Lady Julia (we blush to record it) whistled a low meaning whistle.

"Do you think it can be the same girl?" inquired Elliot, looking at her in distress.

"Think it, Georgie, I am sure of it. Did I not tell you that night—but you would not believe it, because she was pretty—that she was *une créature d'insensibilité*? Just the girl to act in such a manner—Dr. Jennings is immensely wealthy, and is on the spot—Mr. Maitland is poor, not able to

marry at present, and *absent*. What other result could with reason be anticipated?" and Lady Julia shrugged her shoulders in conclusion.

George walked to and fro, looking very confused, then stopping opposite to her ladyship, he said :

"What is to be done with Charley, shall I show him this announcement?"

Lady Julia twisted and plaited the long fringe of her shawl while she considered the subject, and then drawled out :

"If he does not already know more of the matter than this paper tells, you may be sure that the mail bags contain letters from her, and returned *gages d'amitié*; and I think your

safest course, George, is to let him tell you about it."

"Do you think so? and shall I give him the picture—it will be a terrible blow, Julia—I know Charlie well, he is so enthusiastic, and awfully taken with this girl, it will half kill him?"

Lady Julia rose, and laying a little hand on George's shoulder, she said archly, "George, had I jilted you, would you have killed yourself in despair?"

George coloured, and was silent, like a wise man; while she laughed and playfully pulled his moustache. But what was a joke to her was no joke to good-natured George; his heart was heavy for his friend, and he felt

half tempted to sink the carefully packed case which contained the striking likeness of the perjured fair one. There was just a chance, however, of a mistake somehow and somewhere, and that he should yet see Charley bright and happy, secure in his Annie Jennings' love.

"I will hope for the best," he said, and looked down on his rather provoking little bride.

"Do not look cross," said the fair one, "it don't become his pretty mouth," and she again tweaked the handsome long moustache. George punished her in the way she wished, and they continued to bill and coo together very harmoniously for some time after—the other passengers on

deck keeping discreetly at a distance from them.

The voyage was prosperous, although a rough one. Lady Julia was an excellent sailor, however, and she, with the rest of the ship's passengers and crew, got into Madras in good health and spirits.

"Now, Julie," said George, "we must prepare for the tug in the long boat; the surf runs so high, a vessel like this never gets in much nearer than we are at present."

George was looking through a telescope directed towards shore as he spoke, and exclaimed, "God bless me ! Julie, there's that mad fellow, Charley, pushing out in a small boat; so sure as ocean's deep, so sure that cockle-

shell will be swamped in this sea. Just look, Julie," and he held the glass to her.

"Awful! Georgie, but she makes her way—ah! there she's gone down—Oh! good heavens!"

"No, no!" he cried frantically, taking the glass to himself, "no, she has appeared again all right." Georgie commenced to wave his hat violently to the young man in the boat, and Julia sharing in the excitement, held aloft her white handkerchief. Their greetings were returned in enthusiastic fashion, and nearer and nearer drew the boat; at last one great wave, lifting it at a stretch, dropt it down alongside of the *Indus*.

"Here I am, Georgie, all safe ;

welcome from the old country," cried Charley, scrambling up the ship's side, and nearly wringing off the hands of his friend.

"Charley, you are a madcap to run that boat in such a sea."

Charley laughed at his prudence, and inquired for Lady Julia.

"Here I am, Mr. Maitland," she answered for herself; "a jealous wife—you have possession of at least half of my husband's heart."

"Then take *me* to *your* heart, Lady Julia," he answered, gallantly, "and you shall have it all."

"I think we shall be excellent friends, Mr. Maitland," she answered, greatly pleased with his address and his handsome face and figure.

“What news from bonny Scotland?” he inquired, with a conscious glow on his brown cheek. “How is old Daniel, and have you any letters for me?”

“I am sure there are letters in the mail-bags for you, but I have nothing.”

“*Nothing*, George?” in a whisper; “the picture?”

“Oh, that is all right—packed safe, and never out of my cabin.”

“Thanks, old boy;” and Charley gratefully squeezed his hand; “get it for me.”

“Yes; but you will return to shore in the long boat—see, there it is, nearly ready. Do not be so reckless of life as to return in that cockle-shell.”

“No danger, Georgie, do not fear; get me my case.”

It was useless to argue further, and though still protesting, George got him the desired case, and Charley dropped down with his precious freight into the boat. Lady Julia and George watched anxiously that speck on the waters. No need was there to use an oar, or rather there was no possibility of doing so—the waves supplied the place. She was lost to sight for a moment, then appeared at a distance, and with another lift she touched shore, and was drawn up directly.

“He is safe, thank God—safe from the waves, but the poor boy you see has risked life to have that girl’s

picture an hour sooner in his possession than otherwise could be," and turning away with a groan of despair, he ran down the companion-ladder to collect his luggage.

The long boat, with its imperfectly clad crew, were in readiness to convey the passengers on shore—the surf, as usual, having it all its own way, and were landed on Neptune's broad back safe on the spicey coast.

Meantime, Charley's image worship had begun. With nervous, trembling fingers he had carefully opened the case, and taken out, whole, uninjured, fresh from the clever hand of the artist, the smiling Annie—Annie with the Madonna face.

It was a fancy picture she appeared as—the *Madonna della Seggiola*—and in her bright peasant dress, her pure cool face looked out harmoniously.

“O angel! saint!” breathed Charley, tremulously, “what am *I* to be worthy of you?”

He hung her to his wall, he knelt before her, uttering fondest, foolishest words, fitter surely to be heard by a mortal saint than by one raised above our earthly passions—purest love, though it was, still earth was in it—and Charley rose at last, determined not to wait his four years’ probation, but to confess all to his guardian, and throw himself on his compassion. “To write about my love

will be so much easier than to speak it, and I will freshen up with my great passion his poor old heart, which surely did feel like mine when he was young.”

So Charley meditated while dressing for his dinner and ball—ball given in honour of the *Indus* ladies, and of Lady Julia Elliot in particular.

But his mind was disturbed in respect of receiving no letters from Annie. This was the second mail by which he had not heard, and Daniel was silent as well as she. A shadow flitted over his trusting spirit, yet he pushed it from him; he would not harbour a thought unworthy of that angel—he would keep himself worthy to possess her. So Charley dressed, and smiled,

and looked fascinating—more than he was aware of. His appearance had improved even in the five months passed since he had seen Scotland. He was taller, browner, fuller in figure, with the hair on his upper lip not downy as it showed then, but rich in gloss and colour—from the dark blue eyes, with black lashes, looked out the mysteries of his soul—and the earnest purpose appeared in the firm curves of his handsome mouth.

Charley was a noble fellow, and instinctively the bad as well as the good acknowledged it.

“Lady Mountnorris,” said Mrs. M’Gregor, the colonel’s wife, “I assure you your daughter is in safe

hands when she is with Mr. Maitland. There is not a lady in our regiment to whom we would with more confidence intrust our girls—(if we had them, Dugald,)” she said, smiling to her husband, “than to him.”

(Lady Mountnorris, with her young daughter, Lady Flora, had come out in the *Indus*, and was profoundly ignorant of India and of the Madras garrison.)

“Dugald,” continued Mrs. M‘Gregor, “will you say a word for Charley Maitland?”

“A word! if I say one in his praise I must say a thousand. He is a thoroughbred gentleman—and, over and above, he is the most unselfish,

purest fellow ever breathed. He visits the sick in hospital, he spends his money on the poor, he teaches the soldier lads their duty to their God, making them better soldiers as well as men. He is our excellent chaplain's right-hand man, assisting him in every good work. Yet, with all this, he is not straight-laced; although abjuring all kinds of gambling, he often assists the luckless gambler; and to give you an idea how wide is his influence, the greatest scamp in my regiment is his warmest admirer, and runs a good chance of being reclaimed owing to this very fact."

"Yes," added Mrs. M'Gregor, "it is all true Lady Mountnorris. Yet

who has a lighter step in the dance than our Charley? who is so courted by the ladies, young and old?—don't be shocked, it is a painful fact!—they vie with each other, the shy and the forward, the modest and the bold—and the Colonel can testify that he never heard him betrayed into an expression or look not fit to be seen and heard by the most sensitive young girl. We are proud of him—ain't we, Dugald? And here he comes, Lady Mountnorris, with your sweet young daughter looking very pleased."

Lady Flora timidly courtesied, and withdrew her arm from handsome Charley, first introducing, "Mamma—Mr. Maitland—Lady Mountnorris."

Lady Mountnorris received him graciously after such encomiums, and Charley remained for a few moments talking gaily—then saying he must go look for his next fair partner, Lady Julia, he vanished.

“Is he not handsome?” inquired Mrs. M’Gregor with enthusiasm of Lady Mountnorris.

“Yes, remarkably so,” she replied, dropping her double-glasses, through which she had been watching his retreating figure, then glancing from him to her daughter, she perceived gentle Lady Flora’s face dyed in blushes.

Charley had flown off, as he had said, to seek for Lady Julia, who sank at once into his encircling arms

a little more clingingly than he at all desired. She was a beautiful dancer, with the step of a fairy, and Charley being an adept in the art, too, attracted great notice, as—besides Lady Julia's personal beauty and elegance—in her being a new arrival. She was in her glory—the centre of attraction and in the arms of the handsomest man in the room.

George stood looking on with great contentment as regarded her, but watching his friend's gay countenance, anxiously muttering to himself, "D—n her! the vampire, she will kill him. I wish I had had her out here before he ever met her, and I would have left her in a tiger jungle—the jilt—the cat with her velvet paws—

claws kept back only to scratch the better when the time came."

Now the dance is nearly over, and Lady Julia begins to chatter.

"I have not had such a dance, Mr. Maitland—no, not since my academy days, when dear old De Maillie would take me out to show off a *pas* to some of the class. I married poor Buchanan from the nursery, Mr. Maitland—he was years older than I—and *such* an invalid; for three years Doctor Jennings was seldom out of our house. You know Doctor Jennings?" inquired her ladyship.

"Not personally—by name and fame of course I do, and as a Scotchman I am proud of him."

“Of course you are, Mr. Maitland; and he is such a darling! all the mamma spiders in Edinburgh have been weaving their webs in which to catch the great Doctor; but he is a man who could play them all off, Mr. Maitland, and which he has done—he has chosen—”

Here Lady Julia checked her fluent tongue, remembering rather late on what dangerous ground she was treading.

“He has chosen, did you say, Lady Julia?” courteously inquired Charley; “and whom may I inquire?”

“A—a,” she stammered, and seeing no escape but flight, she beckoned George to come to her.

“I am wearied I believe — excuse me, Mr. Maitland,” and taking her husband’s arm, she abruptly turned away.

Charley looked surprised and puzzled for a moment, then sauntered through the crowd, receiving a succession of smiles from his surrounding fair friends, some of whom, still unclaimed for a dance, hoped he would favour them. Charley was not in as sympathetic a mood as usual — vague shadowy fancies — all gloomy ones — chased each other through his brain, and escaping with some difficulty from the expectant fair ones, he wandered through cool verandahs scented with the strong perfume of the orange and the citron.

“My Annie! what is she about now I wonder? sleeping—dreaming perhaps of me—ah! how happy should I be to know it were indeed so. Why does she not write? What sweet little letters are hers—slightly prudish perhaps, yet I like it; that little touch suits well her delicate profile and reverend eyes—type of what is within—and once she is my wife, my very own, then all the slumbering passion of her nature will break out and make me more than blest.”

Now Charley's thoughts turned with startling transition to Lady Julia's information, half worded, of Dr. Jennings.

“Why should I take any interest

in knowing whom he has married? of course I should be glad, philanthropically speaking, that he chose well; but why should my mind revert with curiosity to know who is the lady?"

Charley threw away the stump of the cigar, and laughed outright because he could not banish the positive craving he had conceived to know who was the great Doctor's choice.

"I will ask Elliot before I sleep," he said; "and now this dance must soon end. Ah! what is over me? I never found a night so long before, when music and dancing and fair women were round me."

At last the dance did end; the fiddlers had played even while they

slept, and now ceased to fiddle, and slept on. In the very ball-room the tired wretches had lain down, with empty bottles, and scattered leaves of music, and violin stands stretched likewise—thrown down in haste by the wearied menials after they had extinguished the lights.

As Charley passed through the rooms so lately the scene of life and sound, the contrast they presented struck him forcibly, and chimed in with his excited, nervous state. Here were the heavy perfume of dead flowers—and dead lights; and the strong west wind rushing through the open passages into the vacated rooms, danced round it as if in imitation of the poor mortals who had just left

off. Charlie pictured to himself in the twilight that rustle and stir being brought, not by sensible breezes, but by spirits of those creatures who had been laid years and years ago in the earth from which they sprung, and whose spirits—that subtile essence—were—where?

He shivered, and hearing a heavy tread outside, he made towards it, and found to his pleasure George.

“The very man I want,” he said with a forced mirth; “George, I am possessed I believe—I can’t sleep, would you believe it, until I get a curious question answered.”

George did not laugh—he did not reply; he dreaded the question, for Lady Julia had confessed her indiscreetness.

“Georgie,”—laying a hand on his shoulder,—“Georgie, don’t laugh, but tell me who is the lady Dr. Jennings married lately?”

George shuddered, and was silent.

“George,” he repeated, alarmedly, “why are you silent? what is astray? are you ill? is Lady Julia ill?—speak.”

George groaned, and hung his head.

“You are maddening me,” reiterated Charley, beginning to shake with nameless dread, “suspense is horrible; whatever you have to say, speak it out, man,” and he wildly shook him. “Does it concern me?”

“Yes,” gasped George.

“Then tell me, I command you,” he said with authority that George

could not resist, and answered—"God help you, Charlie! he is married to Annie Jennings!"

CHAPTER V.

CHARLEY BECOMES A CHANGED MAN.

PANDORA'S box now lies spread before wretched Charley, with every woe displayed and with hope hidden. Passion has the mastery of his soul and goads him to madness. His love's sweetness is turned to gall, not even to *bitter sweet*, but to altogether bitter; the poet's soul, which sees all things *very good*, has gone, and the Apostle's soul is present, seeing all nature, all creation, groaning and travailing, and

helpless withal. Yes, a dainty work has been effected by Annie with the Madonna face, and by the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton with the blood *pur et noble*.

Without questioning, without doubt, had Charley received his friend's intelligence—some truths dawn on us by degrees, slowly, slowly—and some are borne in on the soul with the quickness of light, and Annie's little soul, Annie's little heart lies now bare before the eyes of her disenchanted lover.

A feather shows how the wind blows, and now Charley sees plenty of feathers which show, alas! too clearly, from what quarter the wind was blowing all this time when Cupid

threw dust in his eyes that he could not see.

Now he remembered how he had kissed, and how she had removed the hot-house flowers from her band before she received those kisses — now he remembered how he had pressed his lips frantically to her fragrant hair, and how she had carefully smoothed down those ruffled tresses — now he remembered how thick and hot had fallen his scalding tears on her polished brow in that last wild embrace — and had worshipped her for a measured flow of gentle weeping.

He rushed to his room, he tore from the wall that triumph of art, that living, breathing likeness of his saint, his Madonna Annie. He gashed

the faultless nose, the delicate lips, the exquisitely turned chin; he exhausted fancy in slitting the canvas so as to disfigure that picture of a lost love; and then tearing it to the floor he jumped on it as a maniac might do. Then, from the warm resting place of his faithful bosom, he drew a locket which held a curl of her he had loved so enthusiastically. So wildly has his heart been palpitating against it that it seemed endued with life, a moving, feeling creature, and this he stamped to powder beneath his heel.

Next were taken from their secret drawer his Annie's letters, six in number—six precious little letters, no more. She had not much to write

about, and prudently she wrote no more than needful; but Charley had fed on that little given, and found it angel's food; and this manna he seized with rough, unequal touch, and folded round it a piece of paper—tied it—sealed and directed it with no faltering hand in large characters to—

“Mrs. Jennings,
(care of)
Dr. Jennings.”

As he crossed over against the mirror to lay aside the little package, he saw his reflection, and involuntarily he looked behind, for in the image reflected he did not recognise himself. No marvel this, for the wreck of a

man's heart will work an outward change, and Charley's boyish, laughing, sunny countenance had already given place to the man's revengeful, dark, distrustful face.

The Doctor, the celebrated Doctor Jennings should convey to the hands of his fair bride that little parcel in which, so far as decorum had permitted, a saint acknowledged to a mortal love—and up to a date within a short period of her acceptance of the bonds of wedlock with him, the now felicitous possessor of her charms.

However, a longer period was to elapse without this reaching his hands than Charley anticipated; he was stricken by brain fever, and during

many weeks he tossed on a weary bed, raving and speaking out the secrets of his heart. Poor Charley! he met with sympathy from all, and with unceasing care and watching from his friend George, who tried to prevent his sad story being known to all Madras. Day and night (permitted by his Colonel and by Lady Julia) he watched over Charley; and when the poor wasted young man had conquered the fever, he strove to "minister to a mind diseased," and met with little thanks.

"George, old fellow," Charley would say, "you are a first-rate nurse and a happy husband—I wish you joy," (and over Charley's sneering face broke a forced smile) "but a preacher of

righteousness you cannot be with justice to yourself. No! no! my old friend, from my lips learn wisdom:—Come to me all who seek it, and I will teach the way ‘to be happy and wise,’ the way to be honest and true is never to have an old love, and never to have a new.’—That is my way of altering an old song. I will learn from women to play with hearts whenever I rise from this cursed bed. I did think women’s hearts were flesh, but I have found them stones; and as it is in the nature of stones to be broken, break them I will, soon as strength returns to this, *my brother the ass*, as St. Francis called his ill-used body.”

“ Oh, Charley, because one woman

was false do not condemn the entire sex. Now, just look at Lady Julia."

"Aye! she is a jewel, Georgie," and he laughed aloud—not with the merry ring of former days, but so ironically as to even startle obtuse George.

"Charley, I don't like that laugh," he said, "it is not like yourself."

"My dear fellow, perhaps not like to Charley inexperienced, but very like to Charley experienced. You shall probably hear more such mirth."

"Charley."

"Well, old fellow, I am all attention."

"You must leave us for a while ;

you require change—change of air and scene; and even if you were sufficiently strong to resume military duties, I am sure the Colonel would give you leave. As it is, however, you are weak as a cat, and no use in the world, man, to yourself or anyone else. Come now, Charley, tell me where you should like to go, how long should you like to remain, and leave all arrangements to me. Do!” he continued, seeing a softer look cross over Charley’s stern expression. “When will you start? say early next week, and return when strong, and well, and able to forget the past. After all, it is but a woman’s heart you have lost, and ’pon my life! I think you have had a great escape. It is poor Jen-

nings who has made the bad bargain.”

Charley turned aside his head; kind as was George, he could not comprehend the causes from which Charley suffered. It was not simply the loss of Annie, whom he so worshipped; it was the wreck of faith and trust in all things fair. His was a moral death. With love for Annie was bound up belief in goodness, in purity. Job's sufferings came to him so early in life's spring, that he accepted the advice Job so faithfully rejected—Charley cursed God and died. Aye, died to faith in holiness, because it had brought him but misery—too young and full of physical life to know that goodness is its own reward, and must not look for aught else. Still the

burden he was bearing was insufferable, and George's advice was welcome—very welcome; he gave him *carte blanche* to act for him as he pleased, “and the longer leave you can procure me, Georgie, all the better.”

This was all George wanted. He spoke to the Colonel, who indeed needed little pressing to grant a twelve-month's leave to his favourite, Mr. Maitland; and next week, as proposed by George, Charley was to start on his travels. Even the idea of change gave him strength. He was eager, anxious to be off, and the exertion of moving from bed to sofa, and from sofa in his own sitting-room to Lady Julia's pleasant boudoir, was effected in a couple of days. He had a painful

ordeal still to endure, for the last fortnight's mail had brought him two letters which he had not yet had fortitude to read.

“George,” he said one day, “like a kind fellow, read those letters to me. I know the writers—Aunt Merton and my precious guardian; read Aunt Merton's first—yet, no, Daniel's is shorter, and sends a remittance I suppose.”

Charley was right. Daniel enclosed a cheque, and for double the usual amount. He said that the estate was now paying so well, that Charley might count for the future on this payment quarterly, one hundred instead of fifty pounds. Charley sighed, but quickly shaking off the backward thought,

laughed, and called for a bumper of iced claret to drink his health.

“My guardian is a brick, George. We’ll pledge him; long life to the prophet—hip! hip! hurrah!” and Charley becoming rather reckless in his mirth, George got uneasy, and proposed reading the other letter.

“So be it, though it is sure to be twaddle, and no end to it. Thank heavens, I have not the labour of getting through that scratch. See, my poor George, what you have to read; aunt Merton surely writes with a *pin*, not a pen.”

The poor old lady deserved better words from her graceless nephew (which she afterwards did receive), for

after some preliminary twaddle, as Charley called it, she went on to say,

“I have had your name in my will for eight hundred pounds, but my good, excellent Daniel has suggested my *giving* it to you instead. He says it would be an immense advantage to you, as purchase money. Our pride, my nephew, revolts at the idea of a Maitland, the son of my noble brother, standing in even military position, beneath ignoble men — sons perhaps — good heavens! of fleshers and tanners, or who are at best only a generation or two removed from that station; whose hands still reek of the slaughter-house, and on whose persons one almost expects to see the striped apron.

Faugh! my heart grows still at the thought. Now, my dear boy, purchase up at the first opening. I would I could do more for you; but you know, in justice to my poor Daniel, I cannot."

"Good old soul!" George interrupted himself to say, and to which, with well-pleased nod, Charley assented.

"I have been rather more shaky than ordinary, and poor Duncan got nervous at having the responsibility of doctoring me alone, so I permitted him to call in our great Dr. Jennings."

George coloured; he had come quite unprepared on the name, and cast a furtive glance at Charley to see how he

bore it—unflinchingly—only becoming a shade paler, and in a cool, hard voice he begged him to proceed.

“Let us hear how this Doctor bears his happy fate.”

George read on :

“You will be pleased to hear his opinion, Charley. He said, in his own pleasant way, which I will strive to render back to you, ‘*Your Ladyship will live to see my head laid low, and many younger and stronger heads I expect, before your honoured one bows to nature’s laws.*’ Prettily and gracefully expressed, I thought. He is a curious looking man to see on foot, Charley; but when seated he presents a striking appearance — a splendid torso indeed. By the way, he is lately married, and

to a lady whom perhaps you remember meeting at my dinner-table. She is, or rather was, niece to Daniel's friend, Miss Gray. She is dead, poor thing; a diseased creature, she did not die of years by any means—I believe she was younger than I. It was a great matter her pretty niece finding a husband—a very suitable match it is in point of birth—which is an important matter in marriage—and a great one for her, as he is very wealthy, and holds, as a doctor, a pre-eminent position.”

George read all this spasmodically, snatching looks at Charley's face, from which “all virtue, all praise, had departed.”

“That will do,” he said; “and

George, among your other kindnesses, write for me to both these people — thanks and all that sort of thing, and explain shortly that fever has crippled me, and that I am off next week, anywhere you choose to name; and see, old fellow, just say that regular remittances to you will oblige, and reach me all right. Now, no more of that matter,” and Charley turned moodily away.

It has been said by a modern writer,* and truly, “that there is a greater mistake than to be in a passion, and that is — not to feel.” Yet if Charley had not felt he would have been saved a deal of woe, a deal of sin.

* E. S. Dallas.

CHAPTER VI.

A GLIMPSE OF LOCH ACHRAY

STRETCHED on the shore of sweet Loch Achray this sultriest of August days, lies Andrew Jennings the merry boy—the bramble-berry seeker, the laziest, sleepest, indolentest, most abandoned to sensuous enjoyment of any of God's breathing creatures; the very Antipodes of the self-reliant energetic, experimental man of science—the celebrated Andrew Jennings, Esq., M.D.

Stretched at his lazy length (certainly at best a short measure was this), he looked up at the blue sky, and down at the bluer, darker loch in which was mirrored back the fleecy clouds, changing form quick as thought and each form showing a greater beauty. Around him were the everlasting hills closing in loving embrace that sweetest lake—not coy and uncertain in shadows and in motion like Katrine, the sister loch, so close at hand; but pure and calm, unchangeable, like waiting nun listening for the trumpet's sound, her hour of translation to her native soil.

Hummed and buzzed around the Doctor's noble forehead the happy flies and bees, and in merry splash-

ings leaped the fish before him. Soft cooings, chirpings, busy talkings greeted his ears from the living branches; doubly living with their own green life, and with that of the myriads of moving creatures in and round them, and in the distance bayed melodiously the scenting dogs. Surely this was Nature's holiday, and the doctor smiled.

He smiled up and round, and lingered, half in sadness, on a lovely face by his side; then the smile followed on to rest more brightly on a little girl who was intent on picking shells.

Annie! Madonna Annie, looked very lovely in her large straw hat, with its wreath of wild flowers, as,

seated at a little distance from her husband, she plied with active fingers her self-appointed task of knitting a pair of gray socks.

Annie, as we have said, was a famous knitter. She had industriously worked young Charley Maitland two pair of long purple stockings. Now, as the doctor only wore socks, her labour was half as light, and probably he will receive no less than a dozen of nicely knitted gray socks, fitting his neat little feet and ankles quite as well as the long stockings had clung to the well-turned calves of the handsome Highland soldier.

In pleasant reflections like these was Annie wrapped, and naturally her smile was sweet if not quite merry.

“Annie,” inquired the Doctor, with startling suddenness to one who must prepare her answer: “Annie, pretty one, of what are you thinking?”

Notwithstanding her habitual collectedness, Annie stammered and blushed. The Doctor gazed at her meditatively, and, making no further observation, called over Penelope.

“If Ulysses required of you your thoughts, my Grecian, what should you have to tell him?”

The little girl was well accustomed to hear of Ulysses; she did not quite understand her father, but he did not confuse her; and she answered—

“I want a shell to match this one, see, it is pink with wee, wee green

specks. I had one other, but Billie Buchie took it."

"Here comes Billy Buchie, we must ask him for it," answered her father, and his eyes glistened.

Penelope looked in the direction of his glance, and saw the *veritable* thief, Billie Buchanan, with Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, slowly approaching.

The little boy was very fond of the Doctor, he had known him well all during those three years' dying of his father, and baby as he then was, he had loved the calm, sweet face of the kindly-hearted physician. Flying to him now, he seated himself astride on his broad chest, pouring out in a second a flow of childish talk.

"Ulysses," said the Doctor, "a

grave charge is brought against you. Your Penelope says you have stolen—I grieve to have to say it, but you Greeks are terrible thieves—stolen a famous shell painted to Venus' order from a moss rose-bud, it is pink and green."

"She gave it to me, sir, indeed she did, in return for a box of granny's confitures."

"Penelope," ejaculated the Doctor in pretended wrath. Annie smiled, and rising to greet Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, she explained the position of the parties to them.

Doctor Jennings, continuing in his recumbent position, with his young rider across him, apologised to Mrs. Elliot for not rising. "We are on

trial," he said. Beside him stood Penelope, looking very guilty, with a finger in her mouth.

"Penelope, what have you got to say in defence?" inquired the Doctor.

"Cleopatra wished for the confitures, and then she did not like them, and I wanted back my shell, and Billie Buchie ran off with it."

"*E vero*—I mean, Billie, is it true?"

"She did want the shell back, but she had eaten a great many sweetmeats first."

"If I replace the sweetmeats, will you restore the shell to that young lady? it is the privilege of ladies to change their minds."

"Bad teaching," interrupted Mrs.

Elliot in her downright fashion, "you should be ashamed of yourself, Doctor. Is it a wonder there are so many silly women in the world, when we find men like you teaching such doctrine as I heard you just now."

"My dear lady, be merciful if you are strong. I will cease my instructions to your nephew if you disapprove of them, but pray spare me in sparing your sex."

Meantime Billie was watching Penelope wistfully, her tears were thickly gathering and now overflowed in a hysteric burst. Placing round her his soft little arms he whispered—

"Do not cry so, Pen, you shall have the shell." But this was not all she needed, she felt her father had

reason to be dissatisfied with her conduct, and it required all little Billie's reasoning and coaxing powers to check her sobs.

"The shell is quite safe, Pen, in my little drawer where I have all my treasures. Where are all the flies, and the hooks, and my new whip and whistle, and the pretty white stones we gathered on Silver Strand, Pennie. I will fetch the shell to-morrow morning to you, only do not cry."

And Billie wiped away her tears with his little handkerchief, and whispered something about kissing the good doctor.

At this suggestion, Penelope looked up with filled eyes towards her father, but seeing the attention of the whole

party directed towards them, she laid her head on Billie's little breast.

The Doctor smiled and called Mrs. Elliot's attention to the children.

"See how well your Billie knows his privileges, and how my little lady welcomes them. Believe me, dear madam, in according to your sex all it can claim, we are still your debtors."

"Talking of debts," said Mr. Elliot, turning from Annie, to whom he had been devoting himself; "talking of debts reminds me of a little parcel from India for you or Mrs. Jennings, I forget which; my son sent it by yesterday's mail."

"How is your son—and Lady Julia?—I suppose like all ladies, she luxuriates in the Indian climate."

“Yes, she is remarkably well, doctor; and my son and she bill and coo all day long. It has been a very satisfactory match. I am justified in thinking very well indeed of Lady Julia.”

“Umph!” ejaculated his spouse in a remarkable voice, which called a fresher colour to the Rev. Mr. Elliot’s ruddy cheeks. Doctor Jennings who, as Lady Julia would say, had *approfondie’d* her character, whilst in constant attendance on Mr. Buchanan, understood the full significance of Mrs. Elliot’s interjection, and scarcely refrained from an open smile. His quick glance turned away from her now to look at Annie, who was standing by so hushed, he instinctively perceived it was no common silence. Her cheeks

were ashy pale, and her eyes were wandering with a look of terror, and instantly he remembered Mr. Elliot's information about the Indian package.

"Annie," said he, without remarking on her pallor; "Annie, have you any Indian connexion? I have none."

"Yes—no," she replied, in great confusion. "I know Mr. Elliot a little, and one or two of the other gentlemen in his regiment."

"Any of their wives?" inquired the Doctor, dryly.

"No," she articulated, barely above breath.

Mr. Elliot saw there was something astray, and cut in good-naturedly to cause diversion—

“I will send over your parcel this evening, Mrs. Jennings, so all need for guesses will then cease. Is it not wonderful, Doctor, how we turn and inspect the outside of a letter addressed to ourselves, if we cannot tell at a glance from whom it is, doing the very best thing for discovery last—that is opening it.”

“Yes, Mr. Elliot—and sometimes we are quite as slow to open it when we do know our correspondent.”

“Of course, that is taken for granted,” he replied, losing the sense of the application, but which did not fall unnoticed on Annie’s stimulated senses ; and she trembled in thought, wondering how this business would end. She did not know her husband one wit better

than in the first days they had passed together in Hawthornden. She knew he admired and trusted her—she knew he was passionate and loving, but she did not know his nature. How he would receive her tardy confession, did she make it—whether jealousy would fiercely reign over his love, or whether her dissimulation would crush it altogether? She had an uneasy consciousness that they two were sealed books to each other—he did not know her, she did not know him. A stranger, each had married; he had taken her to his heart at once in perfect reliance on her unproved worth, like a man, believing because he loved that she loved him, or would love him; and she allowed herself to

be so taken, encouraging his delusion to gratify her wounded pride—and reckless of his happiness—reckless of his sullied honour—reckless, too, of her own nobility of nature—she lied to herself, she lied to him, and to the altar she went smiling her Madonna smile.

With a puzzled air and a sick guiltiness walked Mrs. Jennings by the side of her meditative husband. The Elliots had parted from them; little Billie, having first obtained his wish of reconciling Penelope and the Doctor. He led her by the hand, slightly reluctant as she continued to be, until quite close to her father, then Billie said—

“Sir, we have both been bad, will you forgive us?”

Penelope glanced up, and meeting her father's glistening eyes, she sprang to his arms; he kissed and petted her, but on Billie's rapturous face of content his countenance dwelt fondly; laying a hand on his head, he said—

“Bless you, my boy, you are a true-hearted little fellow,” and Billie flew off on light, slender legs, the personification of one of the beatitudes, calling out—

“Good-bye, Pen, until to-morrow.”

“Is he coming to see you to-morrow, my darling?”

“Yes, papa,” she whispered, “to bring the shell; but, papa (eagerly) I will not take it back.”

Her father kissed her repeatedly,

but said nothing to make her think she was doing a heroic deed; yet the child knew, in her little tender conscience, that she was doing right, and she met with her reward in her father's affection. Holding his hand, she walked on quietly by his side, and the three very silently turned into the gate of Lunar Lodge.

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. JENNINGS RECEIVES HER LETTERS.

ANNIE did not enjoy her sleep this night, that sleep of innocence which rarely failed her. A conscience ill at ease, and an unripened course kept her waking in efforts to mature it; besides she feared to sleep lest she should dream, and in dreaming speak. Towards morning, however, nature prevailed over prudence, and Annie slept with the rays of the August sun, tempered by Venetian blinds,

dancing on her face; on that face, so pure, so perfect, which had won her the passionate love of the great-hearted man by her side—and his love too, earnest, truthful Charley. The sun seemed now to admire her quite as warmly as either of her lovers, playing with her gently; and both timidly and boldly gazing right down at one eye, then at both, lighting on the delicate traced brow, then on the tip of the nose, and kissing delightedly the pretty mouth with its rosy lips just parted.

The Doctor, who was an early waker, if not always an early riser, turned on his elbow and shared the sun's sport, he too gazed on the lovely sleeper, and sighed. Yes, the Doctor sighed over

her loveliness, and wondered almost why it made him sad. Perhaps he felt more deeply now than ordinarily, "the sad heart of humanity, infidel of joy," and recollections of the Indian packet and of Annie's embarrassment, came with renewed strength of impression to his mind.

Quickly he rose and left her to be adored alone by Heaven's great luminary, and proceeding to his dressing-room he dressed; and then walked out that glorious August morning to breathe the fragrant air, to enjoy nature which never fails to satisfy our cravings, save while suggesting higher aspirations; and, as with a vigorous will he pushed aside the memory of that fair form left sleeping, he enjoyed

rest according to the Greek idea of rest, "activity harmonized." This was not to last—a gentleman fishing by the loch attracted his attention.

"Mr. Elliot, you deprive the little trouts of their breakfast to give you a dainty one. Is that the law of nature?"

"Doctor, we all live on each other. Is not this a law of nature? In catching my fishes I let some smaller fishes, and a great many flies enjoy their meals this morning, and at the same time," he said, rising, "I have the pleasure of assisting Mrs. Jennings at her breakfast. I intend her to share these with my wife," and he held up his basket of living trout for the Doctor's inspection. Very pretty they

looked, glistening still with the water from the loch, and laid in the fresh green grass.

“Opal fish,” said the Doctor, bending over them with commiserating looks, poor “captive beauties.” When the last caught trout, just landed by Mr. Elliot, as the Doctor approached him, slashed his tail into his eye, and leaped back to its element.

Rubbing his eye, which instantly rained water, the Doctor laughed with delight.

“Well done, you brave little man, may you live long to eat many a good breakfast.”

“My very finest fish, the heaviest among the lot.”

“And with the strongest fins. Elliot, don’t be cross, man, the others are going to stay with you, they seem drowsy and spiritless; do not grudge that fine fellow his liberty, he will live to be the father of many a fish for your line.”

Mr. Elliot’s temper was chafed, notwithstanding his sacerdotal character and his wife’s training. He was a keen sportsman, and the Doctor and he seldom encountered one another without rubbing corners on this tender spot with both. The Doctor disliked the *sport* of fishing, maintaining it to be a cruel amusement, unworthy of civilized man.

Thoroughly cross, Mr. Elliot turned roughly on him.

“ I wonder how we should get on, as life is constituted, without preying one on another. Doctors may thank their patients who, poor blind creatures, *invite* their destroyer. Dumb fishes show more sense, for they escape the angler when they can.”

“ Even so, Mr. Elliot, say what you will, I willingly sacrifice myself for the sake of my opal trout. But, with regard to the office of physician, you should not forget how similar it is to the clerical office, beneficial, in proportion to the faith our several sick ones bring to bear on us. My patients believe in my power to cure, and often are cured, owing to their belief. Your patients, sir, who come in a captious spirit, disbelievers in your creed and in

your teaching, go away unsanctified; but the believing, the willing to be taught, who know they are blind and naked, these receive the blessing. Is it not so, Mr. Elliot? I maintain that my patients live of me, as well as that I, in another sense, live of them. Come, come, let us not quarrel even for the sake of my friend Opal; I will even wish you better luck next time, only I must be absent from the scene of action; and see I am the only real sufferer—look at the eye I have got while you have had your sport; you caught Opal! although he did escape, and as you, gentlemen anglers, say that the sport alone is what you care for, you should be satisfied.”

“There is a certain disgrace, Doctor,

attached to it ; I need scarcely say I do not regret the loss of the eating of that trout—I meant it for Mrs. Jennings,” grumbled Mr. Elliot, and, half ashamed of his bad temper, he offered to shake the Doctor’s hand.

“Here comes your little Billie running from my lodge, I believe I can guess at his errand there; good little fellow, Elliot, gentle as a girl, yet he will regret the loss of the trout, nevertheless, I daresay—”

“Of course, he will,” replied Mr. Elliot, with disdain, at a doubt being raised.

“Billie, are you glad Opal has made an escape?”

“Who is Opal?” inquired the boy, amazedly.

“So he names my very best trout, Billie,” said Mr. Elliot, with renewed heat, “white as milk, and heavy as a pup, he was no sooner landed than he took a header under water.”

“Oh, dear, what a pity!” exclaimed gentle Billie, in despair.

“Wonderful!” ejaculated the Doctor, holding up hands and eyes, “wonderful! surely man is a complex animal.”

They had now reached the lodge gate, when Mr. Elliot insisted on leaving half the contents of his basket for Mrs. Jennings, and Billie was despatched with it to the cook; then Mr. Elliot, diving into the pockets of his shooting-coat, produced from one of them a small package, which he gave into the Doctor's hands.

“ I nearly forgot it, Doctor,” he said, “ I was so angry, and Mrs. Jennings would never have forgiven me for detaining her parcel ; will you kindly give it to her, with my compliments ?” Then Mr. Elliot turned off, leaving the Doctor looking very white ; his lip quivered with uncontrollable emotion, and from his countenance *all rest* departed. He hastened in-doors, and took refuge in his study

With hands that trembled with no coward fear, but with the sickening fear of receiving a confirmation to doubts—already raised—of perfect rectitude in one who had been very dear to him, and who was still dear. The thin, large envelope was directed to his care for Mrs. Jennings ; and through that

slender covering he could distinguish clearly the address, to *Charles Maitland, &c., &c.*, and this in her writing—her writing, which he could not mistake—clear, prim, lady-like, blotless writing, upright in its expressed decorum—never one single letter infringing on the rights of the next. No; Annie's character was definable in her caligraphy, and had been employed too often in her husband's service—in transcribing his lectures—for him not to be well acquainted with it. One, two, three, four, five, six letters, all written to the same young man (Doctor Jennings recalled the name and his connections) by *his* wife. What could be the motive for this concealed correspondence but one? Truly Doctor Jennings was not

married to a wife fit for Cæsar. Long he mused over that little package laid before him. With a bent head, round which his hands were clasped, he sat on, thinking bitter thoughts.

“O God! O God! and has it come to this? Deceived! deceived! O blind fool! I was her tool—she used me for her purposes; she wanted a husband—not me. Myself I gave—truly a worthless gift for her my idol, my love, my childhood’s friend, my very saint, yet I gave her the pure gold of the affections. Who was to blame? She thought it dross probably, yet if she thought so she erred in taking it. Am I, then, but dross? I, who have aspirations such as earth cannot satisfy. Yet, is she to blame?—Headstrong, I vowed to marry her, and make

her love me—me at whom she made so merry years ago. Because I was courted—aye, and I believe loved—by many fair and noble women, I never questioned my getting power over *her*, my little companion, my early friend; I trusted her when she came to me, and seemed so willing, so loving. Ah! then I thought she surely loved me, and I would give her all—all I was, all I had gained—fame, fortune, and friends. She married me, and why? O God!” Then with a cry of agony, wrung from a discovered mistaken life’s course, he laid his noble brow in his hands and wept. Had Annie even then confessed, she would have met with pardon full and free; and in so doing, although she could not truly have made him a

happy man, she could have secured him from great unhappiness, and she would have had her little vessel filled to overflowing. But this was not to be; her nature could not alter—she could not be frank, even to herself. She covered her heart, with her own hands putting on the veil, and were she questioned she literally could not have answered who, or why, or what she loved? Yet was she, then, so very guilty? Cheerful, gentle, sweet-tempered, and obliging, she would have made the happiness most probably of her old lover the retired shopkeeper at Granton, with the long line of conservatories; but she never could have satisfied the aching bosom of the noble-minded man who was her husband, to whom, since the

discovery of her deception towards him she became a whip.

Doctor Jennings joined her at breakfast in apparently his accustomed frame of mind, and if he was a shade graver Mrs. Jennings did not heed it. Penelope chattered enough for two. She showed her second pink shell, which she earnestly assured her father she refused to receive from Billie. "But, indeed, papa, he ran off leaving it in my hand, and it is so pretty I could not throw it away."

When the Doctor's breakfast was finished, he rose rather quickly, and taking the package of letters from his pocket, he handed them to his wife, saying very gently,

"Mr. Elliot gave me this little parcel

for you, Annie," then quickly, without a single glance, he left the room.

Annie's fair face flushed crimson ; in silence she received the letters, and mechanically held them, standing motionless, until the last sound of his retreating steps died away, and she heard his study-door close. Then she permitted her eyes to fall on the envelope, and recognised Charley's round characters, and guessed the contents to be her own returned letters. Charley's address to *Mrs. Jennings* set her meditating. "He knows all," she thought; "did he see it in the papers? or was he told of it? who told him? was he distressed? has he forgotten me?" Questions like these she asked herself in utter bewilderment, and this *he* with

whom her mind was so full, was never once her husband, until indeed she remembered him in the next idea started up, "What would Charley think of Andrew, would he laugh at his legs?" And then, with a deep-drawn sigh, she thought how handsome were Charley's, and how long. Then—"Does he wear the stockings I knit for him?" And Annie automatically worked round to the alarming idea of being questioned by her husband.

"Will Andrew ask me any questions? Perhaps he won't, he is so often abstracted. Even should he, I shall easily pass it over. Andrew don't doubt anyone; he never questions the truthfulness of an answer, and he is not given to making curious inquiries.

Whatever excuses I choose to make I know he will accept, so there's an end of it. Still I wish that Mr. Elliot had been so good as to give that little packet to me, instead of sending it through Andrew's hands."

Again Annie sighed, and looking contemplative, thought where to destroy her letters—no fire anywhere in the house save in the kitchen. "Then I will burn them in the kitchen," she said, "I have yet to order dinner."

To the kitchen she proceeded, Andrew's Annie—Charley's Annie—and while giving orders for dinner—and particular injunctions about the master's broth—she burnt her letters. One lingering look she gave to Charley's bold writing before she consigned

it to the flames, and then left the kitchen, turning back to say to the cook, "Remember the sage for the master's broth."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOCTOR RETURNS TO BUSINESS.

ANNIE and the Doctor with a tacit unanimity shunned each other's society this day. Annie was fearful and conscious, the Doctor fearful too, not for himself, but for her. He was cherishing a spark of hope that she would, so far as in her lay, retrieve her falseness by confessing all to him whom she had so injured, acknowledging by this act his worth. For this he watched, yet dreaded to meet her eye. A needless

fear it was. Annie looked on all around except her husband. Guilty—she shunned his searching glance. Faithless herself—she knew not to trust. So days passed by, with no confession made, no questions asked, and Annie's spirits rose in proportion as the Doctor's fell.

“His mind is filled with more important matters than with a girl's silly letters. Even supposing he has guessed that they were love-letters, he would never waste time in thinking twice of them. He knew I was very much admired, and, of course, must have had lovers; the more I had, the greater the preference I showed in selecting him. He has reason to be proud, and obliged also.

How silly I have been to be uneasy."

So Annie reasoned, talking herself into smiles and airs, playing off on the astonished Doctor an amount of coquetry she had never tried on him before. He looked at her amazedly; then taking all her *bouderies* quite gravely, he checked this phase of feminine glorification which to him was simply unintelligible. As a dotting lover, the incomprehensibleness of the mood might have proved piquant, but to a man wounded in his moral sense it was offensive.

"I never saw Andrew so grave before," she mused; "I know that pamphlet of his was printed badly, how ever it happened that Black allowed it. Marks of *interrogation* where

should have been marks of *admiration*. Dear, how easily put out of sorts are these learned men.”

Truly, Doctor Jennings was a mystery to Annie; she did not know that great as he was in physical anatomy, his powers in mental anatomy were greater. His quick sympathies and perceptions, combined with his large heart and clear brain, made him a skilful analyst of motives. And now that passion had left him free to judge Annie's character, it lay bare before him. Lenient was her judge—himself he condemned, who expected too much, and who acted so unwisely in his haste; and her he pitied. Yes, pitied with a pity very clement, indeed, but a little scornful. And Annie and he

never spoke on this subject, so near to both their hearts.

Days, and weeks—and months at last went by, through which he watched and laid little traps to induce her confidence, and in vain. All he omitted to do was to question, and why should he question her? He wanted from her a free confession, and by questioning this desire would have been frustrated.

Time passed, Annie's spirits rose; Doctor Jennings' sank. She became satisfied in thinking him forgetful, and indifferent to her secret, and she put all disagreeable thoughts aside. She did not forget Charley, however. She felt curious to know if he were married. Sometimes she would smile as

she worked, remembering Mr. Merton's wrath and her aunt's terror at her audacity, and then she would sigh, recalling the impassioned words of her ardent lover. Sometimes she would dream of Charley, and once to her great terror she awoke with his name on her lips, and if her husband heard her she never knew. He seemed to sleep, as she turned on her elbow, and gazed fearfully on his calm face upturned on the pillow, but it was a sleep so quiet, so breathless almost, that she feared he heard her; yet as he did not speak nor ask her did she dream, she was troubled for a while, and then she forgot all about it.

By degrees Doctor Jennings heard something of Annie's and Charley's

engagement; not much, no consecutive story, for he asked no questions, made no inquiries. What did it matter? nothing could restore Annie to his heart; she betrayed, distrusted him; he was unknown to her.

Years went by—Doctor Jennings returned with greater zest to his profession, and made shorter visits to Loch Achray.

Annie and little Penelope were constantly there alone, for weeks at a time; country air was needed for his little blossom who was becoming tall and fair, shooting up quicker than was agreeable to him to perceive in the one object now dear to his heart. So Lunar Lodge was often occupied by Annie and her step-daughter: and

between the Elliots and them there was constant intercourse. Billie's and Penelope's friendship grew daily, and Mrs. Jennings availed herself of opportunities of hearing of Charley through Lady Julia's letters to *Papa Elliot* as she named him. She heard of his illness, of his absence from Madras for months; and since then of his gay life and of his intimacy with Lady Julia who adored him, although she acknowledged "He was a sad scamp, but a delightful creature all the same."

Over these fragments of his life Annie thought, and grew a little chastened. Her life was not as cheerful as in former days. She did not enjoy her parties as she used in dear

Aunt Jane's life. Andrew now seldom laughed except when playing with his child and Billy. He was altered in other ways too. She found him ever sweet-tempered and gentle; but as a wife she received no worship, though the pretty woman sometimes received compliments. She would now have even welcomed visits from Mr. Merton, the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, the man who had despised her alliance and thwarted her love, for the sake of old times, for the sake of Aunt Jane, for the sake of the days past in Broughton Place, Flat No. 3.

“Days that are no more.” How dear they are. And Mrs. Jennings dressed magnificently, receiving the *élite* of Edinburgh society, and artists from

foreign countries, at conversaziones in her own handsome house, longed after the parties she used to go to with Aunt Jane; when her feet glided along the tightened linen covers so invitingly spread for the dancers.

Annie's meridian life was on the wane, yet she still looked lovely when well dressed; from no wear of mind or heart had she suffered, and now, at one of her grand evening receptions, as she stood at the top of the splendid stair-case receiving her guests with easy grace, she met with bursts of admiration from the gentlemen, and with severely critical remarks from ladies who would fain have occupied her position as Doctor Jennings' wife. Beside her stood the Doctor, proud,

yes, he was proud of her appearance and manners, she satisfied his taste in her reception of his friends.

A spare, elderly man, with a remarkably small face and head, and long neck, clothed in a black satin neck-cloth—or stock as they used to be called—ran lightly up the stairs, and after bowing low to Mrs. Jennings, rose from the profound obeisance with eyes that shone with admiration. He said, “Excuse me, madam,” and kneeling, he kissed the hem of her dress; “thus we pay homage to beauty.”

The Doctor smiled, and Annie blushed with pleasure. Praise from Mr. R——, the great living artist was praise indeed.

“Doctor Jennings, if Mrs. Jennings

would honour me with a sitting I should be greatly honoured."

"And in what character," inquired the Doctor, gaily; "is it as the Doctor's wife?"

"No, sir, not even as *your* wife; Nature's perfect handiwork should have no adventitious aid to fetch a notice."

"But she should appear in some character, Mr. R——, should she not? Not simply as a lady receiving her friends," replied the Doctor, adding slightly ironically; "represent her as Portia in agony about Brutus; or Cleopatra, Egypt's Queen, lamenting with strong tears for her Anthony."

"My dear sir, of what are you thinking? you dream—for none of these women could your divine wife

afford a model ; no, sir, in her a Madonna finds a counterpart."

Over cheek and brow, over that faultless sweep of shoulders, over that perfect bust, flushed a deeper colour than the Doctor had ever witnessed, with Annie before, and he gazed—gazed at her keenly, then turned away with a deep sigh.

Mr. R—gazed, too, but with different feelings, he gazed with an artist's eyes.

"Very womanly and very beautiful, Mrs. Jennings, but not so suitable for a Madonna as before ; there now, you are toning down, that will nearly answer. Yes, yes, perfect as to colour (Annie was becoming like marble), but there is not sufficient repose in the

countenance yet. The look which attracted and transfixed me, Doctor, has not returned."

And very discontentedly the little man pressed on among the crowd, looking from one pretty face to another; finally he pounced on his own last work which lay on a centre table immediately under a transparency by Millais, and in its contents he soon became abstracted.

Doctor Jennings stood beside his wife and looking sadly, he said :

"Yes, a beautiful *picture*, sweet Annie, you would make, and Mr. R—with cunning hand and a full heart could rub you in a Madonna before which sinners might worship."

CHAPTER IX.

A REVELATION.

ON this same evening that our Annie—Madonna Annie—received the celebrated Mr. R.'s compliments and her husband's friends; old Lady Merton and her model son—the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton—entertained at dinner, in their house in Charlotte Square, Colonel M'Gregor late of the—Highlanders, and Mrs. M'Gregor.

Colonel M'Gregor had retired from the army owing to bad health, and was

now on his way north to his own home ; staying for a few days in Edinburgh, he had left a card on the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton. For reasons well known to himself, Mr. Merton would fain have kept the knowledge of this call from his mother, but in the *Courant* she saw announced the arrival of Colonel and Mrs. M'Gregor at the Prince of Wales' Hotel, and instantly grew fidgety as to paying them attention.

“ My dear Daniel, we must have these M'Gregors to dine here, as my nephew's late Colonel, and as being a distant relation to us, necessitate our showing them some hospitality. Although it will be an exertion at my time of life to visit strangers, it must be

done, and I shall ask them to name their own day to dine with us."

"Yes, mother," he answered, abstractedly. "I suppose you are right."

"You suppose I am right, Daniel. Where are your thoughts, my son?—a Scotchman to be so slow to be hospitable, and to a cousin."

Mr. Merton roused himself with difficulty, and answered with a fraction of truth:

"I was thinking of you, mother. Such an exertion may be injurious to you, and if I explained to Mrs. M'Gregor how you never entertain, I am sure"—

Here Lady Merton interrupted him by gravely saying:

"Really, Daniel, I am not so very

tottering in health, so very near the brink of the grave, as to claim an exemption from national hospitality. I must beg of you to drive with me this day to the hotel at which the M'Gregors are staying, and in case that I have not the pleasure of finding Mrs. M'Gregor indoors, to leave my note of invitation to dinner."

What could the most obedient of sons say to this? He bent his well-poised head stiffly—stiffly, not from bad temper, but owing to physical conformation; and was ready at half-past two o'clock precisely to lead Lady Merton into her quiet little chocolate-coloured brougham, and escort her to the hotel.

With silk umbrella—slender as in days gone by, when Broughton Place,

Flat No. 3, was honoured by its presence—placed between his knees, and with shining hat on head, sat the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton beside his mother. That stiff, rigid, calm appearance told nothing of the inward perturbation. He was wondering how these M'Gregors would talk of cousin Charley. Could he give them a hint so as to spare his mother the shock she would receive when told the facts about her nephew. And then—how much did they know of his story—of his, Daniel's own hand, in Charley's destruction.

It was a sad and difficult problem to solve, and without any acquaintance with the character of this Colonel and his wife, how far could he

judiciously act. Mr. Merton could not come to any conclusion; however, he got a reprieve, for the M'Gregors were out, and the invitation was left, which perhaps they would not accept. But in this he was disappointed—and the first meeting of M'Gregors and Mertons took place, as stated already, on this evening in Charlotte Square.

Colonel M'Gregor was a soldierly-looking and rather over-bearing mannered man, like one accustomed to command and not to be contradicted; his wife was also soldierly in look and bearing, quick and ready in her motions, and quite under orders. When her husband called "*Mouse*"—her pet sobriquet—Mrs. M'Gregor started, not from fear, but from readiness, and then

from his looks—perhaps, without needing words—guessed at his wants.

They were not many minutes seated in Lady Merton's drawing-room before *Mouse* being called, she instantly responded by throwing him his pocket-handkerchief, which he sometimes forgot, and this omission it was her duty to supply.

When dinner was announced, Mrs. M'Gregor, without waiting to be offered Mr. Merton's arm, rose instantly and took it, giving the Honourable and Reverend gentleman no choice—he had to accept it—and leave his mother to the care of another than her son, such an event never having once occurred since the death of Lord Merton until now.

Some years before, Lady Merton would not tamely have submitted to this infringement of her rules, but now she was unequal to taking such a step, and rather confusedly she allowed herself to be supported by the blunt Colonel; while Mrs. M'Gregor, all unconscious of having offended, chattered compliments into the Prophet's ears.

All unaccustomed to such liberties and to such compliments, he scarcely knew whether to be offended or pleased, and with a crimson face he prepared to say grace as the lady released his arm and chose her place.

"Now, Colonel M'Gregor," said Lady Merton, perceiving that he had dismissed soup, fish, and *entremets* with barely tasting each (her ladyship con-

cluded, owing to want of appetite, the facts being his dislike to the cookery), "now please kindly tell me how is my nephew."

Mr. Merton's face reddened—mechanically he seized the claret jug, and his hand shook violently as he poured out the wine. Mrs. M'Gregor remarked the tremulous motion, and drew a wrong conclusion, very unjust to Mr. Merton's temperate habits.

"*Your nephew*, Lady Merton, eh?—how is your nephew, did you say?"

"Yes, sir," stiffly replied Lady Merton, not pleased at being obliged to repeat her question, "Captain Maitland."

"Captain Maitland, madam, is in

right good health, physically, physically," replied the Colonel, with something of asperity in his tone, and with marked emphasis on the word "physically."

Lady Merton looked puzzled and amazed at the abrupt manner of the Colonel, but Mr. Merton, hurriedly cutting in with some remarks on India, its climate and cookery, kept the lead in conversation for some minutes, during which time Lady Merton was collecting her thoughts, oblivious to her guest's fluent Indian talk, and now she ventured on a second question, this time made to Mrs. M'Gregor.

"It is, I believe, nine years, Mrs. M'Gregor, since I have seen my nephew,

and I am sure you will excuse me for making a few further inquiries regarding him. Has he quite recovered from that bad fever?"

"Well, mother," broke in her son, with a nervous laugh, "if he has not before this he never will."

"Fever," repeated Mrs. M'Gregor. "Oh, yes, that fever; we were all miserable about him, I remember, Lady Merton. He was the favourite of us all at that time. As for my husband, he regarded him like his son. Dugald," she said, appealing to her husband, who had at last found something he could eat, and was busy munching some Highland mutton. "Do not you remember how you suffered that time Charley Maitland had fever?"

“Aye, and would to God he had died.”

“Sir!” gasped out Lady Merton.

“Colonel M’Gregor, you forget yourself strangely,” said Mr. Merton, horror struck. This was even worse than he had anticipated.

“Dugald! Dugald!” cried his wife, imploringly across the table.

“What have I said?” inquired Colonel M’Gregor, laying down his knife and fork, and looking up and round the table at the startled face of his wife, at the angry face of his host, and at the excited, nervous face of Lady Merton.

“Lady Merton’s nephew,” said Mrs. M’Gregor in a stage whisper.

“I beg your ladyship’s pardon. I

really forgot," he apologized, when he was made to understand his error. "My only excuse is ——"

"Colonel, champagne," interrupted Mr. Merton, calling his attention to the servant despatched by him, to try and avert the explanation he foresaw impending. The Colonel moved forward his glass, so no good was gained by his *ruse*, and proceeded—

"My excuse, Lady Merton, as I was observing, is that his conduct since has been so outrageous, he has so fallen in public estimation, that I think it still the best wish I could have offered at that time when he would have died lamented and honoured."

"Daniel," faintly inquired Lady

Merton, "what does this mean—did you know anything of this?"

"Why, bless me, madam, can it be you never heard?" said the Colonel.

With parched lips Daniel answered fearfully, "Yes, dear mother, and I thought to spare you. It was not needful that you should know it, when no good could be gained by the knowledge."

Mrs. M'Gregor looked restlessly at her husband, who replied to her looks by determined shakings of his head, and at last uttered :

"Mouse, cease that staring at me, I can't eat my dinner."

Lady Merton, thoroughly roused to exertion by the unhappy stimulus she

had received, changed the conversation, and talked with all the brightness and graciousness of her young days; and very pleasantly passed the rest of the dinner.

Colonel M'Gregor could converse very well when he chose to exert himself, which he did now; and Mrs. M'Gregor chattered unceasingly to the ill-at-ease host. He alone was silent, watching his mother's unnatural brilliancy with terror, until the door had closed on the last attendant, when poor Lady Merton ceased in the midst of a story which she was telling with effect, and turning to Colonel M'Gregor, with clasped hands, she said :

“Now tell me all—all, I beg, I

entreat, and which my son through mistaken kindness has kept from me—all, I say, from that fever which you say so changed him—all, I repeat,” she said, with violence, remarking Daniel’s imploring looks at the Colonel, and his hesitation, “I have a right to know it—he is my brother’s son.”

“I must tell her, I suppose,” said the Colonel to Mr. Merton, who bent his head in answer, and never raised it until all had been told, hurried over in as few words as Colonel M’Gregor could command, yet which conveyed a conviction that Charles Maitland, Captain in — Highlanders, was as great a scoundrel as man could be while preserving the so-called code

of honour between man and man. He did not steal money, nor lie to a man, nor cheat, nor get drunk ; but he broke wilfully, recklessly, every moral law ; he lied to women, he stole from women, deliberately planning the theft of all that was dearest to them, gaining what he did not covet, but to betray. And being so handsome, so charming in all outward show, he seldom failed in his treacheries, even though he plotted against the fair and noble. Young Lady Flora was the last victim.

“She and her mother,” said the Colonel, “came over in the vessel with us. Her days are numbered, poor young thing. Her mother would have withdrawn her from his society

long ago, but she feared her daughter's life was at stake, and she dared not go against the young creature's wishes to remain in India. At last even her eyes were opened to see that he meant nothing good, so she begged her mother to take her back to Europe, and let her die at home."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. M'Gregor, "if he had not been prevented marrying that girl long ago, all this might have been avoided."

"What girl?" barely articulated Lady Merton.

"Miss—Miss—I forget her name," said Mrs. M'Gregor.

"Jennings," said the Colonel.

"Jennings!" repeated Lady Merton,

“Daniel, what does this mean? do you know?”

“Yes, mother,” he answered, painfully.

Then Lady Merton rose, and bending towards Mrs. M’Gregor, muttered: “Excuse me, I am not well.”

Not well indeed, poor Lady Merton! Her son sprang to her side, and, leaning heavily on him, they left the room. Mrs. M’Gregor offered her assistance, but she was waived back imperiously by the old lady.

The M’Gregors remained behind, feeling rather foolish, not knowing exactly what to do, whether it were best to leave the house or wait for Mr. Merton, in case he should return. However, in less than ten minutes the

old servant appeared with a message from his master—

“Mr. Merton’s compliments to the Colonel and Mrs. M’Gregor, and hopes that they would excuse his absence; but Lady Merton continued so weak and faint he could not leave her.”

This settled the question for the M’Gregors, they got their muffling and departed, leaving compliments and condolences with the old butler.

Lying back in her chair while her son knelt before her, sat poor Lady Merton, with all the flush gone from her cheeks, which had made her look so young a short half hour before, and a ghastly pallor succeeding.

“Daniel,” she whispers, laying a jewelled old hand on his shoulder, “tell me, who was this girl? was she Miss Gray’s niece?”

“Yes, mother.”

“And how did it happen? I do not understand. Was it her doing not marrying him? Tell me—explain the story—I do not yet understand this part of it,” she gasped.

“Mother, hear me, it was my doing. I thought everything was against it—Charley’s youth—but chiefly, (I confess) the anomaly it would have been for a girl in her position to marry into ours. Was I wrong, mother? did I judge unadvisedly? Now, since the consequences have been so fearful I have been so anxious,

so unhappy, yet I could not bring myself to distress you by asking for your opinion; but now, dear mother, tell me?" and he leaned forward to catch the reply which came faint and low from that dying woman, and comforting words they were—

"*Right, right, my son, an anomaly surely.*"

"Oh, mother! can you even now say so, after what you have heard? Oh, what a relief!"

And the poor burdened heart of the man, blinded with pride, unloaded itself, and beginning from the dinner-party at which Annie and Charley met, to the day he witnessed her marriage to Doctor Jennings, at Miss

Gray's dying bed, he drew a rapid sketch of the story. A loud snore startled him in the midst of it, and, looking up, he saw his mother's eyes were closed. Furiously he rang, and the hasty summons brought a frightened servant, whom he despatched at once for Doctor Duncan. Fortunately he was at home, and obeyed the call at once; but one glance at his poor old patient's face told a sad tale; wringing compassionately Daniel's hand, he said—

“Get her ladyship to bed at once. I must fetch Doctor Jennings.”

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH LADY MERTON JOINS HER
ANCESTORS.

DR. DUNCAN found the great Doctor at home, having just seen the departure of the last of his guests, and in the act of winding up his watch, preparatory to his night's slumbers.

"Lady Merton is ill—dying, I fear, Dr. Jennings," Dr. Duncan said, on being shown into the study. "I require your valuable assistance at

once, pray—her poor son is in a state of distraction.”

“Of what nature is the attack, sir?” inquires the great man.

“Serus apoplexy, Dr. Jennings.”

“Her age, pray?”

“Her son believes it to be about seventy-nine.”

“Humph; I am ready to attend you, sir. I suppose your carriage waits?”

“Yes, Doctor Jennings.” And with professional etiquette Doctor Jennings motioned to Doctor Duncan to move first from the room, down the stairs and out of the house; then Doctor Jennings took precedence, and which he maintained until he stood by poor Lady Merton’s bedside.

“Doctor Jennings,” ejaculated her pale son, “I fear you will find my poor mother very ill,” and all unlike his accustomed hand-shaking, he squeezed the Doctor’s white hand in deep compassion for himself.

“Very ill, my dear sir, becomes sometimes very well; can you assign any cause for the immediate seizure. Agitation often conduces to——.” He paused, for the Honourable Mr. Merton’s face grew red, and then very, very pale. Alas!—surely his sin had found him out, and through his very virtue pierced him. He now forced himself to inquire would this seizure be likely to prove fatal, and the great Doctor answered not necessarily so, but that her intellect would be impaired.

And truly, as he had foreseen, when Lady Merton spoke again, she did not recognise her son. She pushed him from her as Charley Maitland—the bad boy—the disgrace to the houses of Maitland and Merton. She tossed about on her downy pillows with a restless brain, pursued by her besetting sin.

Poor old lady, do not fret so wildly; you are going quickly—quickly. This violent shake given to your hour-glass by your dearly loved son is hastening with hurried flow your last grain of life. Precious time is nearly past for you, and eternity begins. What then? Will there be reserved places for blood *pur et noble* in that land beyond the grave, from which none

has returned to tell us aught about it?
Who knows?

“We will share the watch, Mr. Merton, Doctor Duncan and I,” said Doctor Jennings, kindly. “I pray you and him to lie down for a couple of hours, and then if you wish you can relieve me.”

Mr. Merton acceded unwillingly, but Doctor Jennings was never foiled of a purpose, so he must fain obey.

In an easy chair, by Lady Merton’s bed, sat Doctor Jennings, the sole watcher of the dying; the little blest man—the man with the large unsatisfied heart, craving to be loved. Lady Merton muttered, and the Doctor’s quick ear caught the sense. She babbled of her early days—of a certain

low-born lover who had dared to look on her, and who was scorned. Now she seemed to remember him, and with some degree of pity called him *poor fellow*, and told out his story—how he died abroad, and sent her back a withered flower she once had given him (not thinking of the gift), and how it was preserved till death.

Then the scene was shifted to her wedding-day; she went through it in part, reproving her old nurse for calling her *ma'am*, the old cracked voice assuming a haughtier tone as she said, "Call me ladyship, your lady—do you hear, nurse?" Then to later days her brain worked round, to Lord Merton's death—to unhappy days after, when her son

James threw off her authority—to a final quarrel, and the well nigh curses she heaped on him. Then her comfort in Daniel—Daniel! the son after her own heart. In this reflection she calmed down, and sank into quiet for a few moments.

Suddenly she roused, and spoke with a stronger voice; and now it was of Charley Maitland—her brother's son—left to the joint guardianship of her and Daniel. Then names are mentioned that Doctor Jennings knew too well, and he leaned forward to catch more clearly the fragments of that fever prattle.

Lady Merton's voice grew angry in its tone, and with startling clearness she said, "Forward, hussy!

deceitful, low-born girl! Kissed him, do you say, under my roof, vile girl! met him daily, then entrapped him into a promise of marriage! Yes; I remember all—the ball his regiment gave—Miss Gray and she were here before it—how the brazen creature gazed at his likeness. Ah! right—right, Daniel, my son! Prevent it, the hateful marriage, though it cost his life. She to become a Maitland—she to marry my nephew—the girl out of Broughton Place flat! Ha, ha!” (the poor thing laughed fearfully) and then resumed her rambling. “Corresponded with him, sat for her picture—one hundred and fifty guineas of Maitland money spent on her face: then she thought he was

wealthy, and could marry her, and when she found he was poor, left him; played with a Maitland, and cast him off. And he, poor fool, poor blinded boy, nearly died for her—she married—this vile creature!—Who? Let me see——”

Closer, closer had poor Doctor Jennings leaned towards the dying woman. He thought he heard his own name, but it did not matter. The story was told out. He had known much of it before—not all—that was the only difference. Drops of perspiration poured down his face. Unhappy man—so noble, to be betrayed; agony it was to such a nature as his.

Gradually Lady Merton sunk into silence, stupor succeeded, and soon

he knew she must die. He rose and woke up Mr. Merton and Doctor Duncan.

“I grieve to say, Mr. Merton, there is no shadow of hope; she sinks fast, an hour or so must terminate her life.”

This was spoken very gently, Doctor Jennings was not less sympathizing because of his present deep sorrow.

“Could I be of any use or comfort to you, Mr. Merton, I would willingly remain, or were I not a stranger to your mother; but even should consciousness return, my unknown face could afford no pleasant spot on which her eyes might rest. Goodbye, sir; to part with a mother is a grief through which we all, or most of us, must pull.

But you have a comfort, sir, remember it now, you should do so—how good a son you have been to her.” Then, pressing the listless hand of Mr. Merton, Doctor Jennings stole gently away; and the old friend and physician of forty years, with the best loved son—the youngest son—the *Benjamin* (surely he was the *son of the right hand*), were left the watchers of the dying woman.

Painfully ebbed away the last drops of that life; no signs of renewed consciousness did she show; one little gasp—one little gurgle—and Lady Merton joined her ancestors.

CHAPTER XI.

DOCTOR JENNINGS STUMBLES AND FALLS.

THE night was very cold and sharp; frost had set in after a thick fall of snow, and Edinburgh—with its many statues and pinnacles—looked very pretty, lighted by the brilliant stars which showed off the white fleecy keepsake left to each little angle and gable and carved cornice by the clouds, and of which they kept a loving grasp.

Doctor Jennings wandered on through

the streets without any settled purpose—quite free from that which should have possessed him, of seeking his home as a well-behaved domestic man should have done. He gazed on the brilliant stars, they returned his interest, shining down on him with blue mysterious lights—on him the groping man of science. Doctor Jennings sighed over many thoughts—most of all over the words so lately listened to at the bed of death, confirming his belief of his glowing heart being left so desolate.

He turned into the gardens of Prince's Street, of which he had a key, and the leafless trees stretched out arms as if they welcomed him among them; and to his excited fancy

they looked like a risen churchyard, clad in white shrouds. One slender thorn in particular seemed to assume the form of Lady Merton, and with a thin white arm appeared to beckon him forward as if to help the newly shrouded soul to its resting-place.

Poor Lady Merton ! (he thought of her parting spirit) "Poor old lady ! she has a deal to learn which ancestors as ancestors cannot teach. Yet why should I despise her ? how was I wiser than she ? madman as I was, to send down all my fire on the altar I raised for myself, and never to see that no offering was there ?" And then the yearning heart found vent in the cry of the self-indulgent passionate man of the East, "*Hast thou* no

blessing for me, even for me, O my Father?"

A neighbouring clock tolled out the fourth hour of the morning. Dr. Jennings shivered; he knew that now nought remained on earth of Lady Merton but the crumbling body.

"Another soul gone home, and whither, O God?"

To and fro he paced in a straight walk, his nerves becoming more unstrung every moment. The trees, to his excited fancy, changed form continually, assuming each moment grotesquer shapes, and bending—making reverence—breathed on him the wind's icy breath. With a great effort he turned towards a gate, and opening

it, emerged on the pavement. Holding by the garden paling, he tottered on, attracting the attention of the policemen, who all knew and revered the skilful physician — the kindly-hearted man. One policeman, to whom Dr. Jennings had been very attentive in hospital, observing how uncertainly he walked, ran forward, and touching his hat to him, offered his assistance, saying, "I fear you are not well, sir."

"You mistake, my man, I am quite well, except for the cold, which has made me giddy."

Then bidding him good-night, he walked on. The man was not easy in mind about him, however, and kept Dr. Jennings in his sight so far

as his beat permitted, and was relieved to find that he turned towards his own home and was walking firmly.

That little talk with the policeman had done the Doctor good; it had roused him up to a sense of present things, and shaken off the morbid feelings which had crept over him. Now he drew near his own home. On the steps some water had been spilt, which formed a coating of ice; Dr. Jennings did not perceive this in the half-light, and slipping on it fell. His leg got twisted and snapped, and his head coming in contact with the scraper received a severe cut. Happily it bled, which saved Dr. Jennings from an unconsciousness that might have

cost his life that bitter night. With a confused sense of his imminent danger, he crawled a step nearer the bell and rang. This bell communicated with a room in which a servant slept whose business it was to attend to night-calls—now, aroused by the accustomed summons, yet still half asleep, he stumbled up-stairs, turned on the glimmering gas, and opened the door on a crouching figure.

“Who are you—what do you want?” he inquired, rather roughly, not pleased that anyone should be ill at night, and started in horror to hear his master’s voice.

“M’Farlane, get me in—my leg is broken—call up Dr. M’Evoy.” (This was his assistant, who lived in the

house). “And mind, quietly,” he said, even in his agony, “so as not to disturb your mistress and my child.”

The servant, with trembling hands, carried in the bleeding mutilated figure, then flew for Dr. M’Evoy, and in a short space of time this faithful friend was by his side, but so paralysed with distress at the state of the Doctor that he was unequal to think of the right things to be done, and it was from the sufferer that he took orders.

The leg was set, however, and the wounds of the head dressed; all done quickly, and the pain borne with such silent endurance, that no sounds disturbed Mrs. Jennings’ per-

fect slumbers. A sleeping draught gave Dr. Jennings some hours of rest, and before taking it he gave Dr. M'Evoy directions not to alarm his little daughter by telling her abruptly of the accident.

"Be easy on the subject, my dear friend," he replied, soothingly, "I will break the unhappy news gently as is possible to her and Mrs. Jennings."

"Oh! Mrs. Jennings," he said weakly, "it will not hurt her."

Dr. M'Evoy was perplexed, but he did not dwell on this speech; he dismissed it with the idea that his friend's mind wandered.

Dr. Jennings was right, however, Mrs. Jennings did not suffer when

she was told of her husband's accident—possibly fatal accident. Penelope, a tall delicate girl of fifteen, went off into violent hysterics, for which attack Mrs. Jennings' collected bearing and cool hand was the best sedative. Dr. M'Evoy looked at her with professional delight, thinking what a charming hospital nurse was lost in her.

With the household beating their breasts and tearing their hair—quite ready, headed by Penelope and Mrs. M'Laren, to sit down and throw dust on their heads and draw sackcloth on their loins, Mrs. Jennings looked calm and Madonna like, and went about on tip-toe, giving orders—with wools and knitting-needles in bag

on arm, to knit diligently at odd moments.

For many days Dr. Jennings lay between life and death; surrounded by comforts such as friends with skilled and ready hands can bring, and wealth can buy. Annie would gladly have attended him, and well she could have nursed him, but Dr. Jennings, collected or delirious, would not hear of it, although Dr. M'Evoy urged him to permit her attendance.

“No, M'Evoy, not until I am better—if I ever shall be.”

“But it is now she would be so useful, and she is very anxious to be admitted. My dear friend, do permit her—you can have no idea without

trying her what an inimitable nurse she makes—so cool, so collected, so light and steady in hand; invaluable in pouring out drops.”

“No, no, M’Evoy, no,” replied the sick man, and Dr. M’Evoy, with a sigh, had to resign the point.

Sometimes Dr. Jennings raved, and raved of a deceptive wife, of an assumed love, of treachery baser than Brutus slaying of Cæsar; but Dr. M’Evoy knew he raved, and delirium takes such curious forms—indulges in such curious fancies—he was not dismayed. He felt his friend’s flying pulse and sighed :

“No wonder, with that prancing pulse, such fancies should possess him.”

And Annie — how did she feel? Very sorry indeed, and very anxious. She would watch at her husband's door sometimes, and run out on the stairs to hear the latest news from Dr. M'Evoy as he passed and passed again. And she kept up Penelope's spirits, from whom the worst accounts were concealed, by Dr. M'Evoy's express orders, and took her out to walk and drive every day, and attended to her education, the governess continuing to instruct her as usual—the music lessons alone being stopped for the present. Then when Dr. Jennings was permitted chicken-broth and beef-tea, &c., Annie would taste them before they were sent up to the invalid's room. All this, and

more than this, Annie did, and more she would have done had she been permitted. And she never once showed any impatience at being debarred her husband's sick room. O no ! Annie was a model of obedience ; she did not fret or fume, or scold the Doctor, who acted under orders from her husband—nay, she would not be so unjust—he was not to blame, and her husband knew best what was good for him.

“Remember to tell me, Dr. M'Evoy,” she said, “immediately when Dr. Jennings will admit me. I do not think I should excite him.”

“No, indeed, madam,” Dr. M'Evoy replied, “I think your presence would be most beneficial, but we never

contradict a patient except it be with regard to a very important question.”

But Dr. Jennings was soon to distance the enemy. Death gave him a respite this time; yet he remained still near enough for Dr. Jennings never to lose his shadow out of sight. Yes, he saw it when others did not; even his watchful friend M'Evoy believed he was mistaken, and only saw the fancied shadow of a shade.

“Be it so,” Dr. Jennings said cheerfully, one day, “for some reasons I would fain take your judgment before my own. The earth is a glad earth still—with her warm sun, and her fruits and flowers, and hills

and vales, and birds and beasts
—nay, *even* with *man*, my dear
M'Evoy," he said, grasping his hand
warmly; "and now let in to see me
the wife and bairn."

CHAPTER XII.

DOCTOR JENNINGS ADMITS VISITORS.

THE little Grecian, as her father named her, was no longer deserving of the epithet *little*. Five feet five, and slender as a rush, with lily-white cheeks, and lips, which were not quite pretty, owing to their delicate pallor, and which contrasted strikingly with the scarlet head. But one little touch of colour would work a magic change, it was all that was wanting to form a very pretty girl.

“Wait a little,” her father would

say, "and you shall see my lily become queen of the roses." And Lunar Lodge, the Highland home, was to work the change, where riding on the shaggy Highland pony, with Billie as companion—and rowing in the little boat, with Billie as companion—the Doctor expected her to gather roses. And Billie thought her as lovely as he did eight years ago, and Miss Penelope made as great a tyrant over him as in those days when she quarrelled over wee, wee, pink shells. And although she seemed careless of his devotion, she warmly resented the smallest deviation from it.

Good and gentle was Billie—a lad of about her own years, with a tender conscience and a chivalrous sense of honour, he gave early pro-

mise of a high nature, and Doctor Jennings (who, practical man of science as he was, was given a little to castle-building) smiled in thought of a possible future for Billie with his little Grecian, in which romantic idea Mrs. Elliot participated. Mr. Elliot would have pooh-poohed it had the matter been mooted before him, but both Doctor Jennings and Mrs. Elliot knew better than to betray themselves. The possible future lay in their bosoms a dead secret, only taken out and aired when they two were alone together.

“Mr. Elliot would think me an old goose, Doctor, if he heard me; yet there is little folly in the matter. I can see clearly that my Billie loves the very print made by her little foot, and

his nature is a clinging constant one that will not naturally change."

To this the Doctor would readily agree, but say that he was not so sure of his child's constancy—that even now her preference for Billie was no more than that induced by close and early companionship, so that until years should develop her character, they could not with any confidence build up their fair castle.

"We must bide our time and adjust our forces so far as we shall be able to bring them to bear on our object when the fitting time comes; if it ever will to me," he would wind up by saying, for like most doctors, as with many other men, he presaged for himself an early death.

The meeting between him and Annie, and between him and Penelope, was characteristic.

“Oh Andrew, I am so glad to see you—how long it seems since that dreadful night. You have grown very thin and pale, (Annie continued, as she kissed him) but you lost a great deal of blood, and your fever was very high, Doctor M’Evoy told me.”

Doctor Jennings pressed her to his bosom, and then pushed her from him, and gazed at her beautiful face with its calm expression. “Annie! Annie!” he muttered, and his eyes filled.

Behind her, peeping with the timid expression of a nervous child, stood Penelope, her pale cheeks flushing, and the tears rushing to her eyes at the

sight of her father's altered worn face. And when now he feebly opened his arms to her, she sprang forward and tightened round him her young slender arms, weeping out on his breast, "Darling, darling father! Oh, how I have missed you, and they would not let me in to see you—cruel, cruel as they were—even Clary thought they might. Oh papa, never, never send me from you again—promise me, papa; and come soon, very soon to Lunar Lodge, where you must get strong and well."

"Let me go, Penelope, I cannot breathe," he cried, and Annie gently reproving her, removed her arms from round her father's neck. He sank back with closed eyes on the cushions, and tears trickled down his face."

"See, Penelope, what you have caused," Annie said in grave tones.

"Do not blame her," murmured Doctor Jennings, "the child has done me nothing but good. Only I am so weak, you should not see these foolish tears. Bah!" He dashed them aside and smiled at Penelope, who looked a little reassured when she saw him smile.

"Now, Annie, produce that wonderful knitting and sit beside me—so—there that will do—I can see your faultless profile from this. And my Queen Penelope, chatter away, tell me when you heard from Billie, and how he is—and Mr. and Mrs. Elliot—and the pony—and the boat."

"Well, papa"—gladly answered the

young lady, seating herself on a stool beside her father's sofa—"Billie says pony wants exercise, she is getting fat and lazy."

"Wants her young mistress to scamper over country I suppose, and Billie wants her, too, I suspect."

"Well, yes, papa," and Miss Penelope coloured a little and looked down. "Then he says the boat wants paint, and that the dogs are very lonely without us; and he says he is sure, and Clary thinks so too, that if we had you in the boat and rowed you on our lovely loch, you would get strong in no time."

"Nay, is that it?—the joint opinion of Mr. William Buchanan and Mrs. M'Laren; we must try it."

“Papa—Clary should know something about what is good for sick people, don’t you think?”

“Yes, darling, you are right—and Billie too, eh?” Her father pinched her pale cheek.

“No, papa, not Billie exactly. Yet I am sure you would be better at Lunar Lodge.”

“I think so, darling.”

“Then, will you come, papa? and soon—very soon,” and on receiving a promise to that effect she clapped her hands with glee.

“Quiet!” warned Annie, with forefinger raised off the knitting-needle for an instant.

Doctor Jennings looked from the face of his still beautiful wife, pic-

turesque in her madonna beauty and calmness, to the excited nervous face of his young daughter, with a curious expression. The wonderful contrast they presented struck him fresher than ever.

“Do you really mean to come to Lunar Lodge, Andrew?” Annie inquired, surprised at the quickness of the decision.

“Yes, Annie, indeed I do. I, as well as this little girl, have conceived an intense desire to visit—for me—*once more* my *Lunatic* Lodge, as the angry architect named it—Lunatic Lodge, fit abode for me.”

“Once more, papa, what do you mean?”

“Once more, my darling, must be so,

until it becomes twice or thrice. Is it not so ?”

Penelope was puzzled, but she dared not press for further explanation, something in her father’s countenance, so sad, so absent, made her loth to do so; and meditatively she took up Annie’s knitting, which had been laid down for a moment while she poured out some medicine for her husband. The *little Grecian’s* thoughts were surely not turned to counting stiches, consequently Mrs. Jennings had to rip a few rows of her neatly executed work before she could continue it.

“My dear,” she said, with mild reproof to her step-daughter, “two things cannot be properly done together, unless it be an exceptional

case. To learn to knit and think of Billie, or of Lunar Lodge, are not compatible things."

Penelope coloured, and muttered, with tears in her eyes, "I was not thinking of Billie, mother, but of papa."

Dr. Jennings, whose thoughts were distant, turned at hearing his name breathed in troubled tones by his child; but questionings were prevented by the servant bringing in a card deeply edged with black.

"Doctor, the gentleman wishes to know will you admit him?"

Weeks and weeks had passed since Lady Merton had given her last dinner party; weeks, so many that now they ceased to be reckoned by weeks, and

all that time the physician who had been called in to certify to death's presence had been laid prostrate, and still all Edinburgh called daily at his door to ask after the health of the man whose value they so clearly estimated. Ring—ring—ring—surely Dr. Jennings' porter had no sinecure.

Dr. M'Evoy had advised his patient to admit a few friends, one at a time. He thought some talk of the outer world would be beneficial, and although he found it irksome, Dr. Jennings had agreed to the advice. Now, handing the black edged card to Annie, he asked her to remain in the room, and desired the servant to show the gentleman up-stairs.

Annie had no time to raise an ob-

jecting voice before in walked the Honourable and Reverend Mr. Merton, slimmer, and blacker, and graver than ever. He and she had never once exchanged words since the day, now eight long years ago, that the congratulatory words had died away, but half formed, which he offered on her marriage. They had passed each other in the streets occasionally, but never once so as to necessitate a recognition. Annie's sight was quick and keen, and she saw in time to avoid seeing when she so desired it, and in the Honourable and Reverend Daniel's case it was ever her desire. Crimson she now grew with mingled feelings—with a sense of injury and a recollection of a softer kind.

Annie had within the last year had time for reflection, and as Charley's bonny face grew dimmer to her view, her days of happiness before she met that captivating figure shone clearer. In them appeared continually the constant, welcomed visitor—the stately polished minister—the courtly gentleman—whose quiet appreciation of her charms was not unknown to her. Truly, his conduct had been shabby—unjustifiable—in separating her from his cousin, and mean and cowardly in not asking her for himself—in not braving boldly the proud old lady and the line of crumbling ancestry. Still love for her had caused him to do this wrong, although it was a weak love that could not be bold at least just then. But

what if he had meant to keep her unwon until his way was cleared a little for his wishes? His angry words, insolent words, words so hurtful to her pride—would thoughts to which such words gave utterance have been, save for his passion at losing her?

In those days Annie had not reasoned thus—her pride alone had felt the stab and directly she sought her remedy, and deceived the noble man into whose confiding arms she threw herself.

Mr. Merton, after bending over Doctor Jennings' sofa, raised his spectacles to Mrs. Jennings' face, and bowing low, coloured. Annie hurriedly let fall her eyes, and with more rapid motion than ordinary flew her invaluable knitting. Her husband's words and

Mr. Merton's fell with unmeaning buzz on her ears, and Penelope twice whispered before she received an answer for permission to go with Clary to Prince's Street Gardens to hear the band play.

Mr. Merton felt grateful to Doctor Jennings for his kindness to his dying mother, and with a choking utterance he talked over her death; and received from him comfort in the assurance that although agitation might have hurried on her death to die that moment, yet that her life had hung on a thread which the least thing must have snapped.

“Let us never look to second causes, Mr. Merton, it brings needless suffering, believe me. To do our duty—to find out what it is and do it, is the lesson to

be learned in this life. Excuse me, sir, that I should speak thus to you, but so good a son should take the comfort he has so well earned."

Mr. Merton thanked him, but he was evidently struggling with an unanswered thought—had he done what was *not* his duty? Doctor Jennings was properly speaking but a healer of bodies—so what business had Mr. Merton to seek his aid in spiritual difficulties? besides was not he by his very office shut off from making such confidences? and Mrs. Jennings was present.

This made the Prophet's position more painful—he had scarcely seen her yet; a mist had risen before his glasses on his entrance, and Annie's madonna

head had since been bent to her knitting. Now he received an opportunity, however, for Doctor Jennings addressed his wife.

“Annie, please give me that little manuscript I have just finished, I want to show it to Mr. Merton.”

Mr. Merton hastily glanced at Annie, who gracefully placed the roll of paper in his hand. He stood up and bowed, a burning flush suffused his face; he saw she was still lovely, and the picture of Charley’s life as drawn by Colonel MacGregor rose before his conscience.

Dr. Jennings saw that there was some mystery, and associating it with his wife’s life before he married her, he instinctively got at the truth of

Mr. Merton's love for her; yet he wronged him in supposing that his present confusion arose from a not forgotten love, and his manner became cold.

“I merely wished to show you the slight sketch I have made in this little biography of an eminent man, whose conscience, like yours, sir, was too sensitive; I mean so far as I know of your conduct as a son.” (This was an interpolation that would not have been, but for Mr. Merton's flush, which had led him into error.) “It is not worth your while, sir, to look at it, it will be shortly in print,” and Doctor Jennings wearily put it aside, notwithstanding the desire Mr Merton expressed to read it then.

“I must ask you, Mr. Merton, to excuse me; I am feeling very tired and must be left alone for a time.”

Mr. Merton hastily rose, begging pardon for his want of consideration in remaining so long with an invalid, and bowed himself out.

“You do look tired, Andrew,” said Annie, bending over him. “Shall I leave you also?”

“Yes,” he answered, shortly, “and send M’Evoy.”

CHAPTER XIII.

DR. JENNINGS SEES LUNAR LODGE ONCE

MORE.

ON a sweet, bright morning in May, “a May from head to heel,”—such as poets sing of and has been—Dr. Jennings, Mrs. Jennings, and Miss Jennings, and Dr. M’Evoy, left Edinburgh by train for Callander. On a water-bed lay Dr. Jennings, with a faint flush of excitement on his cheek, which fidgetted his friend M’Evoy exceedingly. He did not like to see it and

he was goose enough to say so to the sick man. It did not matter, however; Dr. Jennings knew too much of the human frame to be deceived about his own, and notwithstanding the fluctuations of better and worse, he was aware that his lease of life was nearly expired.

“I am sure you would like to feel my pulse, M’Evoy,” he said, smiling, and baring his wrist he offered it to be felt, as the train stopped for a few moments at a station.

M’Evoy eagerly seized it and shook his head.

“I could have told you, my dear friend, without your counting it; I know how this beats,” and he laid a hand weakly to his heart.

“Andrew, do you feel ill—worse?” inquired Annie, starting and looking up from her work, which she plied as ever diligently—unceasingly.

“No, Annie,” he gently answered, “not worse, rather better.”

“Oh! that is well. Dr. M’Evoy you are an alarmist, you look so terribly grave.”

Graver he looked at this remark, and sighed profoundly, as Mrs. Jennings placidly resumed her knitting.

Penelope was quite unconscious of what was taking place inside the carriage; her senses being all engaged on objects from which the train flew almost as soon as seen. On memories of Scotland’s kings and heroes, con-

jured up by sight of Bannockburn's field and by Linlithgow's blackened ruin Castle, Queen Mary's birthplace—by sight of Niddry Castle and Stirling's Towers, and Wallace's monument and Doune Castle—and by the magnificent chain of the Highland mountains. At sight of these she remembered Billie and her dear Highland home, then turning round a beaming face to her father, she pointed to the view and said,

“Dearest papa, we shall soon be home, and then—then you will get quite strong again.”

Dr. Jennings smiled, but did not speak.

Penelope did not miss the answer, her own mind was full of a child's

fresh pleasures, and she spoke again, entreating to be granted a sudden whim.

“Dear mother, dearest papa, may I drive on the Dreadnought hotel coach when we reach Callander; I have never—never driven in it, and papa, darling, you half promised to take me a drive the next time we went together home.”

“Yes, my pet, to *take* you I did half promise; I cannot do that now.”

“No, no,” she said, and sighed, “and I am so sorry; but mother would come with me I know, if you permit,” and entreatingly Penelope turned to Annie.

“If mother approves, I can say nothing against it.”

Penelope looked radiant as Annie agreed to take it.

Now in swung the expected train to Callander's pretty station, and down looked on it with doubtful welcome dark Benvenue, as if half resenting that hideous apparition on its lovely demesne; and there stood that very captivating coach with its four horses, Penelope's coveted conveyance.

"The box seat, mother; we must secure the box seat," whispered Penelope to her mother. "I shall not care half so much for the drive if we do not get it; and oh! mother, I am sure it will be taken if we do not hurry about it. Speak to the driver; there he is in his scarlet coat and white hat."

“We must first get your father into the carriage, my dear; do not be so impatient.”

But Dr. Jennings overheard Penelope, and saw her colour rise from fear, and, regardless of himself, he called Dr. M’Evoy to his side.

“Go and take the box seats in the coach for Mrs. Jennings and this child; she is in a fever of excitement about it.”

“Thanks, dearest papa, but I see—I see that gentleman there has just been talking to coachy, and I am sure he has taken them—I saw him tip him.”

“Over tip him then, M’Evoy, if need be. I believe I know the driver’s weakness, smart young Sandy M’Alister.”

“Andrew, never mind Penelope; there is quite time enough for the coach, the horses are not yet harnessed; indeed it would be best to start you first.”

Penelope looked and bit her lips with impatience, her father smiled and persisted in his orders to Dr. M'Evoy.

“Annie, the child is right, there has been bribery already, just watch M'Alister; see how he goes about looking into the hurried faces of the passengers, guessing to a fraction, I daresay, the length of their purse and the extent of their credulity.”

Dr. Jennings' observation was correct; already the box seat was taken, but Dr. M'Evoy's conversation with

the snowy-hatted, scarlet-coated young man became interesting. M'Alister's face beamed as the Doctor's coin made its way to his pocket, and he found means to oblige the young lady.

Moving on easily among the crowd, he walked up to the gentleman Penelope had before remarked talking to him, and an animated discourse ensued. They heard M'Alister boldly assert,

“A mistake, sir, altogether I find—I am very sorry—but it can't be helped. The seats were engaged long before by our great physician Dr. Jennings, for his lady and daughter. They were taken days ago I find, sir—I knew nothing about it until a moment ago ;

I assure you, sir, it is a fact—just look at the names in the booking office.”

Coachy added this, knowing that there was no time now for such an examination. The officials were all busy, and everyone engaged in getting on as quick as possible. The gentleman who had been placidly smoking had to be content with cursing the driver for playing him such a trick—a trick as he persisted in believing it to be. Little did coachy care—his palm was still feeling the tickle of the superior coin he had received, and on he moved whistling a low tune—looking mild—a conspicuous object among the crowd.

Penelope's thoughts and looks now

reverted to her father, and she watched with tearful eyes his removal to the carriage which had been brought down for his accommodation. He seemed very tired and weak, and yet he had a smile in return for Penelope's and Annie's anxious looks.

They were now mounted on the coveted seats, with that mercenary young man beside Mrs. Jennings, occupying the very smallest possible space, seated edgeways. To do him bare justice he managed his team in first-rate style, although he did not keep his eyes much on his horses—they were otherwise employed, being directed to his passengers, shrewdly calculating the extent of their wits,

and in his observations Mrs. Jennings and Penelope came in for their full share, for constant visitors as they were to the country, this was the first time he had had the honour of driving them.

On they drove, Penelope enjoying herself to the full—the exciting mountain air, the rapid pace at which they were swinging on, and the enchanting scenery were enough to exhilarate the sluggishest of blood. Annie shook off her morbid state of lukewarmness, and with delicate colour and bright eyes gazed around. M’Alister looked at her in respectful admiration, quite lovely she appeared under her broad-brim hat, with a fleeting expression of the fresh beauty of youth called up for the moment by excitement.

But now snowy-hatted, scarlet-coated, handsome M'Alister, you need to withdraw your gaze from that bewitching Madonna face, and look to your horses instead, for a carriage comes at great speed towards you down the hilly, narrow road, clattering the drag-chain behind it; within the carriage lies, with folded arms, a gentleman whose face is half-hidden by luxuriant whiskers, moustache and beard. A very sun-burnt face it is, as if darkened by torrid climates, and not its native hue; and the hair, though very dark, has a glimmer of light, telling of sunny curls in boyhood's days, and suiting well with the violet eyes which the stranger now showed as he raised them to the

Trossach coach, looking with curiosity to see how the rival drivers would manage to pass each other on that edge of a road.

Certainly a narrow shave it was, and managed dexterously by M'Alister with his four-in-hand. Penelope's terror was so great in that momentary crisis, that she clung to Mrs. Jennings, screaming violently. The gentleman looked up with a careless glance and a slight smile, and encountered Annie's eager, half-frightened, inquiring gaze. He seemed fascinated by it, looked steadily at her for an instant—the careless glance changing rapidly to a flash of surprise and scorn — and springing up in the carriage, he raised his hat, displaying

to Annie's treacherous eyes the altered face of her once honest young lover, Charley Maitland.

The carriages passed each other triumphantly, Penelope still shrieking, and too frightened to remark the manner of the stranger. Not so M'Alister, he saw it all—saw Mrs. Jennings' frightened looks and parted lips—saw the gentleman's leap up in the carriage—and, looking back, he saw him still standing, with wild excited looks gazing after the retreating coach, and expression so fierce that M'Alister supposed him to be insane.

Annie, lying back with bloodless lips and quivering frame, confirmed M'Alister in his supposition, and acting

on it, he addressed himself to her directly :

“ Gentleman out of his mind, ma’am ?”

Then turning to take another look, he informed her he knew the carriage—that it belonged to Mr. Elliot, of Bees Crag.

“ Does it ?” asked Annie, faintly, obliged to say something.

Penelope, recovered from her terror, caught at the sound of her dear friend, Mr. Elliot, and entered into conversation with M‘Alister, which lasted until the coach arrived at Lunar Lodge. There the ladies, with their luggage, were set down, Annie mechanically going through the necessary acts of getting off the coach and paying M‘Alister, and seeing that hers and Penelope’s

boxes were taken down—and, walking up the little gravel path to the house—and speaking to her servants—and patting the dogs—all she did as in a dream—while remained before her eyes, as if stereotyped, the fierce blasting look she had received from her soft, adoring lover of nine years ago.

Charley Maitland, Major Maitland rather, sank down exhausted as the Trossach coach wheeled out of sight.

He muttered, “I should have been prepared for this, yet I forgot it all—forgot what Elliot had told me of her living somewhere here—her husband’s lodge—ay, near Bees Crag, she is going there now, and soon we must meet, shall meet daily. In an instant I remembered her—that face—that

face which so bewitched me—and has undone me; fair as ever, it appeared to me now. Fiend in an angel's form! To tempt me by a vision of Paradise—to send me to destruction!" Major Maitland buried his face in his hands in deep and painful thought, from which he was roused by meeting with a new obstacle on the road.

A travelling carriage slowly approaching drew up to one side. A gentleman sprang from it, and, taking off his hat, addressed him, asking his pardon, while he pointed to his friend, who lay back in the carriage with closed eyes.

"If you have any brandy with you, sir, will you be so kind as to assist my friend here? he is ill, sir, and on his

way to his country seat from Edinburgh. I forgot the brandy flask in the train, and he has become so weak I fear he will faint."

Major Maitland's nature was not so changed as to be insensible to physical sufferings, he pulled out a flask from his pocket, and, jumping out of his carriage, offered Dr. M'Evoy any assistance in his power. Not much help was needed, the brandy revived Dr. Jennings, and opening his eyes, he found a stranger's keen gaze fastened on him, (Dr. M'Evoy had named him to Major Maitland while they stood watching the reviving man.) A thrill passed through Charley's frame, and, with a quickened pulse, he looked at Annie Jennings' husband.

Between the injured lover, conscious of the presence of the man who had usurped the place he should have held, and him the guiltless usurper and unconscious beholder of his wife's lover, a curious link of feeling was instantaneously formed, and with a burning face poor Dr. Jennings looked into the dark countenance of Major Maitland. He did not speak—he could not frame a word for a few moments; Dr. M'Evoy talked unceasingly—told him what he thought his looks showed his desire to know. That this gentleman, driving past, Samaritan-like, had poured on him oil and wine, (*i.e.*, brandy), and save which timely aid, Dr. Jennings would be now knocking at the golden gates.

Doctor Jennings found a few words of thanks for the stranger, yet with pleasure he saw him withdraw and get into his own carriage, followed by Doctor M'Evoy's fluent thanks. Major Maitland politely raised his hat to the sick man, looking at him so fixedly as to make Doctor Jennings literally shiver. He said to Doctor M'Evoy when the stranger had driven off—

“That man has affected me with the most uncomfortable sensations I ever felt unreasonably. I wonder who he is. He is very handsome, and his voice is sweet, yet he is to me like Mephistopheles.”

“A sick man's fancies, my dear friend—nothing else. The gentleman's appearance was most opportune. Now

my dear Doctor, I should say that Mephistopheles' presence could never be opportune—eh ?”

Doctor Jennings tried to smile with M'Evoy, but it was a weak, sad smile. He then broke out saying—

“M'Evoy, there is no good in concealing it from you, or of your trying to hide it from yourself, I am—dying !”

“My friend, my valued friend ! nay, do not say so,” (M'Evoy grasped his hand.) “Nerve yourself, you need a spur which only you can give ; you have life, plenty of it, to run many a day ; think yourself equal to something and the thought will bring the power. Remember, my dear sir, what a loss your death would be to science, to the

world—to your wife and young daughter—remember poor Miss Penelope, Doctor, I entreat of you.” Poor M’Evoy wiped his forehead, excitement and distress bringing out great drops of perspiration.

“Remember my child, do you say! Ah, when do I forget her! Yet she will not pine long, so best. We who boast ourselves of another order of creation from the beasts, in how do we grieve differently from them—except in time? The cat misses her drowned kittens for a day maybe—and mews and mews unceasingly too for that little span, and we cry out our little day, and are then comforted—the cat with cream—the child with a new toy—and—the widowed wife with a new lover.”

“Doctor!”

“Ay, M’Evoy—you have no wife, your feelings can’t be hurt. And now my friend of many years, you think you owe me some gratitude—you believe I have done you good service—nay do not answer me, and do not look so piteous, I believe you are as grateful as man can be” (M’Evoy tried to speak and nearly wept in trying). “There is one promise I should like to get from you—a promise to do an act for me which will be probably distasteful to you, and which may bring on you reproach and slanderous tongues; and this, too, when your friend, the man who has climbed so high the ladder of social promotion that men break their necks in adoring

the successful man—ay, the *successful* man, for he is the world's idol—when he shall be no longer at your side to silence all aspersions : I need scarcely say that what I would fain request of you is no unrighteous act, but an unusual one, to such the world objects. That is simply the whole of it. Have you courage to go through with it, M'Evoy ?”

“Yes, Doctor, on my honour, there is my hand ; I care not what the world thinks or says, so you desire a thing to be done that I can do, it shall be done, so help me God !”

“Thank you, and now listen.”

Doctor Jennings then spoke very low, and M'Evoy coloured highly and looked flurried, but again promised

to fulfil his wish, although he was evidently unprepared for the kind of act to which he had pledged himself. He then sunk into thought as well as Doctor Jennings, and the rest of the journey was performed in silence.

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